

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 3

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 3, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

132 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 3

Epistles of 1 John and Jude

In 1 John it is a question of apostasy, in Jude of corruption. In John the antichrists go out; in Jude the false brethren come in, and with them corruption. In Jude those who separate are like the Pharisees who took the first places. The ungodly are still seen in the midst of the faithful (Jude 4, 15). Cain, Balaam, and Korah are the three characters of the evil within. In John it is apostasy; they go out. Such is the character of these antichrists. They deny that Jesus is the Christ; it is Jewish unbelief. They deny too the Father and the Son; it is unbelief as to Christian truth. The evil of John and that of Jude, antichristianism and corruption, can co-exist, just as we may see it in prophecy.

A Reader Inquires

"My neighbor invited me over to watch a wrestling match on his new television set. I replied, 'I am going to the prayer meeting this evening, and hoped he would not ask again, but he has not dropped it, and insists that I come later. He is a professing Christian and I do not want to offend needlessly, but do not intend going to see his television show. How best can I answer him?'"

ANSWER: It is well that you came right out the very first time and showed your colors by telling him you were going to the prayer meeting; and you will probably be better off to let him know that the reason you do not come is that you are not interested but have something better. Your desire not to offend is good, and we need special wisdom from above to know how to Walk in separation from the world or worldly-minded Christians and yet give a testimony that is most likely to win them for the Lord. Our answers should be with "meekness and fear," as we seek to set before them our treasure in Christ who is in heaven. They need to know that our separation from the world's pleasures is not monkish asceticism, but the preoccupation of a person who has something infinitely better. Who would condemn a man for refusing to accept some copper coins if he were already loaded to capacity with gold? Our friends and neighbors should know that it is not that we feel we are better than they, but that we have found a better value and greater joy in Christ than anything the world can possibly offer.

If they speak about television, what vision does it bring? The world in its glory, its pleasure, and its crime-the world that is stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus. Does not Christ our glorious Head in heaven surpass any vision that earth can give? Should not ours be the language of Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" We have a treasure in the heavens that never fails, and where nothing can ever spoil it; it will last forever, while every vanity down here is but for a season. "The things that are seen" (by the natural eye, even in television) "are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18.

O worldly song and pleasure,

Your charms are spread in vain;

I have a greater treasure,

Where all is lasting gain.

An Advocate With the Father: Provision for Our Present Need

Blessed indeed it is to see how rich and full is God's provision for our need. There is not a single need that can possibly arise in the history of God's people that He has not foreseen and made provision for. And it is well if our hearts have drunk in this blessed fact, for it will help to give us confidence in God, and enable us to go to Him in every time of need.

In John we have the manifestation of eternal life in the Person of Jesus; and as partakers of this life we are in relationship with God, and have communion with the Father and the Son. But this communion may be broken through sin. The relationship cannot be destroyed, but communion is interrupted. Now the same grace that brought us into this relationship with God, restores communion also when it has been lost through sin. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." This is God's gracious provision for His own children when they have lost communion through falling into sin.

Before we look at this point, let us notice a little the fact that God's Word makes no provision for a believer to sin. John says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." He does not say, "that ye may sin," but "that ye sin not." In the first chapter he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; and "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." So then, we have sin, and we have sinned. Yet, true as this is, God has brought us to Himself in grace where we walk in the light as He is in the light. But what is the ground of this? How could God, consistently with His own nature and character, give us such a place? The simple soul-satisfying answer is, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Blessed and sure foundation for our souls to rest upon! "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." How wonderful is God's grace abounding over all our guilt and shame!

But "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." It is all to deliver us from sin, not that we may go on in it. God is not only "faithful and just to forgive us our sins," but also "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In virtue of Jesus' blood we are pardoned once and forever; but we are also morally cleansed through the Word applied in the power of the Holy Ghost. A new nature is given, and as this is regulated by the Word; we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. May we then lay to heart that the whole work of grace is to deliver from sin - from its guilt, and from its power and defilement. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

But the soul-humbling fact remains, that the believer, though a child of God, and walking in the light, does fall into sin; as James says, "For we all often offend" (N. Trans.); and as John here says, "If any man sin." We still have the flesh in us, and if allowed in the least degree, it is sin, and communion is broken. God has condemned sin in the flesh on the cross, and if we are allowing what He has condemned in the sacrifice of His Son, He cannot have communion with us.

Now God has made provision for the restoration of this communion when it has been lost. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." God provided a Savior for us as lost sinners, and He has provided an Advocate for us as failing children. And thus His provision is complete. It covers the whole range of our need from first to last. Jesus died for us to save us, and now He lives for us on high, a High Priest with God, an Advocate with the Father; and there He maintains our cause according to the value of an already accomplished and eternal redemption founded on the shedding of His own blood.

There is a difference, no doubt, between His intercession as in Hebrews, and His advocacy as in John. But all is founded on the value of His sacrifice for us. In Hebrews His intercession is in view of our weakness. Here His advocacy is in view of sin which has interrupted communion. Both are needed. We are weak and can no more take a single step in the wilderness journey in our own strength than we could have saved ourselves when in our sins. It was as much the power of God that conducted Israel across the wilderness, as it was His power that saved them out of Egypt. And, so it is with us. It is God's salvation and God's power from first to last. We are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"; and because we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are, except sin, we can "came boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (1 Pet. 1:5; Heb. 4:15, 16.)

But in John it is not merely a question of weakness. It is if any man sin. And here "we have an advocate with the Father." It is "with the Father." Mark, though we may have sinned, the relationship is not broken - God is our Father still. The relationship abides, but communion is interrupted and needs to be restored. And this is brought about through the advocacy of Christ who has undertaken our whole cause. We have this Advocate. It is God's provision and nothing can possibly hinder His services for us in this capacity. It is an unconditional service characterized by pure grace. It is no movement on our part that secures it. It is not, if we repent, or if we confess our sins, but "if any man sin, we have an advocate." It is all grace. The whole movement begins with Him, just as when He saved us in the first place. As surely as sin has interrupted our communion with God our Father, so surely the advocacy of Jesus goes on to bring about its restoration. And this is what makes the restoration certain, sooner or later. If left to ourselves we could never get right. But all begins with Him, and His work cannot fail - blessed be His name! Repentance and confession have their place, but these are the results of His advocacy, not the cause; and the difference is very great. But we will look at this a little more fully that our souls may get the full benefit of it.

I repeat, the action of the Advocate does not wait for our repentance and confession. We may take the case of Peter as an illustration. Before he had committed the terrible sin of denying his Lord, Jesus said unto him, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He was indeed on the way to this sin, being filled with self-confidence, and he needed to be sifted, and the sifting was allowed to take place; but Jesus prayed for him before he fell into the hands of Satan, and his faith did not fail. He was indeed sifted, but his faith was sustained even in that dark hour when Satan would have filled him with despair.

At the suited moment Jesus looked on him, and His words were brought to his remembrance, and then "Peter went out and wept bitterly." Here was indeed repentance, but it was the fruit of the

Lord's intercession, and not what led to it. Afterward Peter was restored. There was the message to him from the risen Lord by the women, and the Lord appearing to him first of all the apostles and, last of all, the probing of Peter's heart to reach the root of the evil, but in all this we see only the Lord's own action in meeting Peter's need. And He meets our need too when we, like Peter, have turned aside. It is a service of perfect love and unmixed grace, not waiting for anything in us, save the need which arises from our failure and sin; and even this it anticipates, as we have seen in the case of Peter.

We may now look a little at the ground of this service of our blessed Lord. Our Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous." The righteous One represents us; "as He is, so are we." He is our life and our righteousness. We are in Him, the righteous One and thus stand before God in immutable righteousness. "And He is the propitiation for our sins." He has suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, has borne them in His own body on the tree, and has perfectly glorified God about them; and His presence on high is the witness of our perfect acceptance in Him, according to the value of His propitiatory sacrifice. On the ground of this, He maintains our cause on high and, if we have sinned, secures our restoration to communion.

It is important to see that His advocacy is not in any sense to atone for our sins, as if they were imputed to us. He atoned for our sins once in His death on the cross, and this can never be repeated. By that one sacrifice all our sins are covered, and there can be no imputation of guilt to the believer, as it is written, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"; and again, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." We have been pardoned and justified, and are in Christ, according to divine righteousness, so that the advocacy of Christ can have nothing to do with satisfying God about guilt, or securing pardon for us, as if sin had been imputed to us.

Even the sins we may commit after having believed were all covered by the death of Christ, and they are not imputed to us; but they hinder communion with God, and this is an immense loss to our souls.

It is God's good pleasure that we should be in communion with Himself, and that our joy should be full. But practical holiness in us is absolutely necessary for this because God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. We cannot go on in sin, and have communion with Him; and hence, if we sin, we need to be restored so as to enjoy afresh the communion we have lost. And for this Jesus our Advocate intercedes on the ground of the fact that we are in relationship with God according to divine righteousness, and according to the value of His propitiatory sacrifice.

And now a word as to the action of the Lord's grace toward us when overtaken in sin. A beautiful picture of this action is given us in John 13, where the blessed Lord washes the feet of His disciples. Peter did not understand then, but would understand it afterward. He also, in his ignorance and pride of heart, resisted the Lord's action saying, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But "Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Peter then desired Him to wash his head and hands also; but Jesus again answered, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

All, except Judas the betrayer, were already washed, and were "clean every whit." They were clean through the word which Jesus had spoken unto them (chapter 15:3). They were born again - born of water (a figure of the Word) and of the Spirit - and thus were clean. We are born again but

once, and in this get a new and clean nature, and thus are washed all over. But washing of the feet applies to our walk as Christians. Our walk needs to be separated from the defilement of this world, in order that we may have communion with Christ in glory. It is thus we have a part with Him. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Rejected and cast out of this world, He was going back to the Father. But He did not thereby give up His own which were in the world, but "loved them unto the end." And in going to the Father, He would have them linked up with Himself in His own blessed relationship with the Father, to have communion with Himself and the Father outside the world which was the scene of His rejection and death. But to have part with Him - communion with Him - according to that heavenly relationship, it was necessary to have the walk kept pure (the feet washed) according to the truth of this relationship. Thus the blessed Lord has girded Himself for this lowly service of love to His own in order to keep them in communion with that heavenly scene where He is, forming their affections according to the revelation of Himself to their hearts, as they are being conducted on to their portion with Him in glory.

Do we then fall into sin? Do our feet become defiled in our walk through this evil world? Well, we have an Advocate with the Father, whose plea for us cannot fail, and who also turns to us in blessed grace, with towel and basin, to wash our feet and bring us back into the communion we have lost. By the application of His Word to us, we are led to self-judgment and a walk of holy separation from evil, according to the truth of the cross, in which sin in the flesh has been condemned. May the Lord give us to walk thus in happy communion with Himself.

Jesus also says, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." May we also heed this admonition, following His example in the same lowly grace, and in the power of the same divine love.

One thing more. If we have sinned, and the Lord is seeking to wash our defiled feet, or if our brethren are seeking to do so in the Lord's name, how solemn if we are resisting this action of grace! God is not mocked! He is full of patience, but if we are rebellious He knows how to chastise and break our stubborn wills. Oh! may we trust our feet in the hands of the blessed Lord, to be washed when the need arises through our failure, bowing to His will with repentant hearts and with chastened spirits, and humble, prayerful dependence on God, seek to walk in His fear, and in the realization of His perfect and unfailing love and grace.

An Aged Apostle's Message to His Children: a Word for All

In the first chapter of his first epistle, the Apostle John presents to us the Word of life - the eternal Word - the eternal Son of the Father - in whom eternal life subsisted, and in whom, as a man, it was manifested in time down here in this world; and all this that we might have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Then there is a message declaring God's inflexible holiness - light admitting no degree of darkness - speaking at the same time of the blood that cleanseth from all sin, and gives fitness to be in the light of that holy presence.

In the opening of the next chapter we have, in the advocate with the Father, the divine provision for failure in the walk of those who have been brought into the light, and the means of restoration to communion when it has been broken by sin. Then follow the great characteristic traits of the divine life in man obedience and love. These were perfectly displayed in Christ; and Christ having become our life, these are the tests of reality in us.

Having established these fundamental principles, the aged Apostles goes on to address his children, first all together, and then in three classes - "fathers," "young men," and "babes." There is that which was common to all; and then there is that which was peculiar to each of these three classes, and all presented in beautiful order.

We will first look at that which was common to all. This was forgiveness of sins. He writes to them all as having been forgiven. In doing so, he calls them "children." The word "little" is not in the original. When he divides them into three classes, "fathers," "young men," and "little children," the last is a different word, which does mean "little children" or "babes." But in the first instance it is simply "children," and the term includes all that the Apostle addresses in the epistle, the same as in verse 1 and in verse 28 of the same chapter. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." He does not write to them

in order that they might receive forgiveness, but because they had already received it. He wrote to them as those whom God had forgiven for the name's sake of His beloved Son.

He had already written that which would test the reality of those who bore the name of Christ, and which would distinguish between the true and the false. But this was not intended in any wise to shake the confidence of any who had really been born into the family of God. Those who, without reality, and in carelessness of heart, had taken a place among the children of God, might well tremble at what the Apostle had written, and which necessarily condemned them, as when he says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

These were solemn and heart searching words before which the careless, or the hypocrite, or the false teachers, might well pause, and consider their bearings, and learn in the truth whether their

profession was real, or whether they were blindly drifting on in darkness, soon to be plunged into the dark abyss of eternal woe. But solemn as are the warnings given to such in God's Word, they are never intended to shake, or disturb in any degree, the peace of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus, and who are seeking with purpose of heart to serve and follow Him. On the contrary, this aged Apostle and father seeks to assure his children in the most happy way, by telling them that he writes to them for the very reason that their sins had been forgiven them for Jesus' name's sake.

Not a cloud would he throw over the mind of the youngest or the feeblest in all the family of God. He would have all in the full blessed consciousness, and unclouded assurance, that they were in the light, and without a spot upon them - the youngest babe as much as the most aged father, or the most holy, apostle, washed and made whiter than snow in "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," which "cleanseth us from all sin."

And blessed it is to our poor hearts to know that the knowledge of forgiveness is not something to be attained only when the Christian course has been nearly run - perhaps only on a deathbed or, it may be, not till the poor storm tossed soul stands before the great white throne, overwhelmed with terror, and crushed with dark uncertainty, while it awaits the sentence which is to fix its eternal destiny. No, dear reader, forgiveness of sins meets us at the very threshold of Christianity; and the assurance of it greets our souls the moment we believe the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the meeting point between our souls and God. But it is a Christ who died, who was buried, who was raised again; and the moment we meet God in Him, we find Him a Christ who has borne our sins, having been delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Thus all is settled between our souls and God, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4:24, 25; 5:1.)

Christian attainments there surely are, but forgiveness of sins is not one of them; for if I have not forgiveness of sins I am not a Christian at all. My sins are still between my soul and God, and exclude me from His holy presence, leaving me under judgment and exposed to eternal wrath. Forgiveness cannot, therefore, be a Christian attainment at all. I know there may be such a thing as being forgiven, and not knowing it; but this is not a normal condition of soul. It is a result, either of wrong teaching, or of inadequate apprehension of the truth. The very gospel that announces salvation to the lost, and forgiveness to the guilty, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, gives also, in the most assuring terms, the knowledge of forgiveness to all who believe it. -Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38, 39.

In such terms as these the blessed gospel of God's grace speaks to the poor sinner, and such assurance it gives to the one who believes it. It speaks unconditional and eternal pardon to him who, falling down before God as helpless and guilty and lost, believes in Jesus; and it assures such a one that his sins are blotted out forever, and his guilt canceled by the atoning blood of the cross, never to be brought to light again. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," is the conscience-purging word of the blessed God who pardons through faith in Jesus' blood. And the words John writes to his children are in happy confirmation of this blessed truth. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Happy children! Their

sins may have been many, yea, more than the hairs of their heads, and they may be conscious that they are poor, feeble, failing creatures still; and Satan may thunder in their consciences, and seek to accuse and condemn, but the word of Him who cannot lie sustains their souls in unclouded peace. "Your sins are forgiven you."

And it is "for His name's sake." Were it for anything in us, we might well question, and doubt, and fear. But if it is "for His name's sake," who in heaven or earth or hell can challenge our title? God has owned that blessed Savior, and exalted His name above all. He has given Him a name that is above every name. Before that name all thrones and dominions must yield subjection, and every knee - all angels, all men, all demons - must bow. It is THE NAME OF JESUS. It is the name of Him who suffered on the cross, whose blood was shed for the putting away of sin, who by His atoning sacrifice has infinitely glorified God, and who has vanquished forever the adversary of our souls. "For His name's sake" God forgives.

Dear Reader, have you believed God's testimony to that wonderful name? Have you believed in the name of Jesus? Then listen to that dear old Apostle that knew Him so well, and the cleansing power of His precious blood, and hear him addressing you among the children to whom he writes these words: "I write unto you,... children, because your sins ARE forgiven you FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."

THE FATHERS

We have already seen that among those the Apostle calls his "children," there are "fathers," "young men," and "babes," or "little children." The "fathers" are those who have grown old in the truth. The "babes" are those newly born into the family of God. The "young men" are a class between, who have the strength of manhood, being no

longer children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; nor yet having reached that experimental knowledge by which they have learned the utter vanity of everything apart from Christ. The "fathers," on the contrary, have had full experience and, like Solomon, having written "vanity" on all that is under the sun. They have learned to know Christ as their only and enduring portion. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." 1 John 2:13.

It will be noticed that the Apostle addresses each class separately-the "fathers," then the "young men," then the "babes." In verse 13 all three classes are addressed. Then in verse 14 the "fathers" and "young men" are addressed the second time, and in verse 18, the "babes," the message running on to the close of verse 27.

We will now look more particularly at the message to the "fathers." We have already quoted from verse 13, where they are addressed the first time. When they are addressed the second time, in verse 14, the message is the same; and there is nothing added. It is simply, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning."

And this is most beautiful, and instructive. There was nothing to warn them against, and there was nothing new or further to set before them - nothing which they did not already have. They had Christ - "Him that is from the beginning"-and that was enough. There was nothing to go back to - nothing to go forward to. To go back would be to return to the world which they had found to be

only vanity. There would be no gain in that. And they could not go forward to anything beyond without giving up Christ and Christianity, and there would be no gain in that. Christ was their all. They knew Him as the sum of all their blessing, their enduring, their eternal portion. This is what characterized the fathers in Christ.

I have said there was nothing to warn them against. They were acquainted with the flesh and its ways, with the world and its attractions, and had judged both as worthless and evil. It was not something merely that they had been taught; they had learned it experimentally. In their own experience they had proved what the flesh is in its utter insubordination to God, and had learned that God's judgment of it in the

cross and death of Christ was the only remedy for it. It was a judgment which was according to truth and holiness, a judicial ending before God of what was in a state of fixed and eternal enmity against His nature, and incapable of being subject to His holy law (Rom. 8:7.) They had learned the truth of this judgment, and had bowed to it experimentally in their own souls. It was not something they needed to learn now, even in experience. They knew it in such a way as not to need any warning against it.

So also it was as to the world which is in enmity against God as well as the flesh, and which also has been morally judged in the cross. To the fathers the world was but the scene in which the flesh flourishes - that to which the flesh in its nature and desires fully answers, and which furnishes the food on which the flesh subsists. Moreover, the world had cast out and crucified God's well beloved Son, and thus its whole status and condition was laid bare. The fathers had learned its true character. They knew it as an evil system estranged from God, and governed by Satan's will and power. Whatever might be its pretension, whatever its glitter and show, whatever its allurements and enticing temptations, to the fathers it was all a vain show, a scene of gilded sin and wickedness which could not endure in its midst the presence of the holy and blessed Son of God. And besides, there was nothing in it that could satisfy the soul or give real joy and happiness. To them it was practically a judged scene in which they had neither part nor lot. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, they had been delivered from it; and in their practical life and spiritual mode of existence, they were outside of it, and had no desire to return to it. Happy deliverance!

But all this experience had been gone through in connection with the truth of Christ. Apart from Christ these things could not be learned. And the result of the experience was that Christ was known as the only worthy object of the heart. All else proved to be but vanity. When all else failed, Christ remained the same, the faithful, unchanging One, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," the One who will remain the same throughout eternity, filling and satisfying the soul, when experience has become a thing only of the past, and when flesh and the world are no more.

This blessed Christ the fathers know. They have proved Him as the One in whom they can always trust. In all their varied experiences and trials, they have found Him faithful. In every time of need He has proved the succourer of their souls. He has been their joy in sorrow, their strength in weakness, their stay in adversity, their unfailing resource at all times. And He is the eternal Sun of their souls, the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, their all in all for time and eternity. They have followed Him, they have served Him, they have walked with Him, they have communed with Him, and they know Him, not merely by report, but by intimate and personal acquaintance. Blessed knowledge! It is what we shall have in eternity. Only then it will be in glory,

and in a fullness far transcending aught that is known in the poor earthly tabernacle here. But the same thing is known in the soul now that will be known then, though the soul be fettered and held within bounds and limits. Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face. Now we know in part, then we shall know as we are known. There will be no fetters, no bonds then - nothing to hinder or cloud the glorified vision. Christ will be known then in all the brightness and blessedness it is possible to communicate to His glorified people.

Yet even now, though it be not in the same brightness or fullness, because of the body in which we still groan, through all our varied experiences Christ reveals Himself to our souls in a most blessed way, and we learn to know Him as friends know friends - not merely as the One who has saved us from wrath and judgment, but as the One who is ever with us, bearing us on His heart, sustaining, comforting, blessing, and drawing our hearts and affections out to His own blessed Person. The fullness of His grace meeting all our need by the way is realized; the varied beauties and glories and perfection of His Person and character are discovered; and His unchanging and eternal love fills the heart and satisfies the affections He Himself has awakened. Blessed, glorious Christ! infinite delight of the Father! eternal brightness of God's glory! light and joy and center of courts above! Object worthy of eternal homage and praise! may we learn to know Him more and more. May we so learn to know Him that before the brightness of His presence every other object may fade away, leaving Himself the alone object of our hearts, our all-sufficient, our present and eternal portion.

An Aged Apostle's Message to His Children: the Babes

The babes know the Father. They may not, like the fathers, have learned the vanity of this world, and that Christ is everything; and they may not, like the young men, have known conflict with the wicked one; but they have known the Father.

We have already seen that the babes, in common with all Christians, have forgiveness of sins. But there is more than this; they are also in the enjoyment of a present and known relationship. They are children of God, and have the spirit of adoption in their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

This is no matter of attainment. It is not something gained after years of Christian experience. It is the very starting point of Christianity. The youngest babe in Christ has the forgiveness of sins, possesses the Holy Ghost, and knows the Father. Without these no one has entered upon the ground of Christianity. Christianity is characterized by this great fact: redemption has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ, who has gone to the Father, and sent down the Holy Ghost to take His place in and with believers, and to set them consciously in the position and relationship of a glorified Christ on high. These babes are in this position and in these relationships. They are in Christ, and His relationships are theirs, and they have the Holy Ghost as the power of it all, and as the divine source of all spiritual intelligence. In all this there is no difference between a babe and a father. They all have the same position and the same relationships in Christ. And this, surely, is most blessed..

Now we have seen that the great danger to which the young men are exposed is to be found in the allurements of the world. As yet this is not the special danger of the babes. One who has just been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's Son, cares little for the world. The children of Israel, standing on the shores of the Red Sea which they had just crossed, and where they had seen their enemies engulfed in death under the judgment of Jehovah, would not have been easily persuaded to return to the land of bondage where they had groaned in "anguish of spirit" under the lash of the taskmaster. The rest they now enjoyed was too fresh and sweet for that. But after they had in a measure forgotten the rigors and hardships of that cruel bondage, and grown weary of the wilderness journey, and loathed the bread of heaven, then they lusted after the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic of Egypt, and were ready to turn back.

So it is now. One who has groaned under Satan's taskmasters, making bricks without straw, when set free from this bondage by the power of God, enjoys the sweetness of liberty too well to return at once to the world. While the heart overflows with praise to God, singing, "The LORD,... hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation," the world has no charms. Its cruel bondage is remembered, and the sweetness of freedom is enjoyed, and the heart turns away from the world to find its satisfaction in the deliverer, looking on to a habitation with Him. "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation." (Exod. 15)

But the babes have their special danger as well as the young men. One thing that marks a babe is the readiness with which it receives everything that people say. So with a babe in Christ as to spiritual things. They are simple and artless in their reception of truth, and eager to increase in knowledge; and the enemy lays hold of this very thing as an occasion to seduce them, and lead them away from Christ. Their great danger lies in their being seduced by false teachers. Satan seduces the young men through the world, and the babes through antichrists.

The Apostle affectionately warns these simple babes of their danger. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

The antichrist is coming. He will come according to the unbelief of the Jews, denying that Jesus was the Christ, and so will come in his own name, not in the name of the Father, as Jesus said to the Jews: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." John 5:43. When he comes, it will not be at the first as denying that there is a Christ, but as claiming to be the Christ Himself, until he has seduced his victims; and then the mask will be thrown off, and he will deny the Father and the Son. This is the true mark of the antichrist. He will be a liar from the first, because he will deny that Jesus is the Christ, as the Apostle says, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" Afterward he will deny both the Father and the Son, as the Apostle again says, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." This gives his full character when all is unmasked. He will come also with terrible satanic power, by which he will darken men's souls, and lead them into open apostasy and rebellion against God. He will exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, and sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. He will get his power from the dragon, so that his coming will be "after the working of Satan," and this "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. He will make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men to deceive them; and he will make an image to the beast (the imperial head of the ten kingdom confederacy and raised up by the power of Satan), and to this image he will give breath so that it should speak, and cause the death of all who refuse to do it homage. Thus he will delude men, and lead them to believe that he is God, with power to create, and work miracles. But the wonders he performs are "lying wonders," by which he will seduce the mass of the Jews and apostate Christendom after the true saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Men receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved; and for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, and that all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). All this display of satanic power, and malignant hatred and opposition to God, will take place in the closing days of what the Apostle calls "the last time."

Now the little children had heard that antichrist was coming; but the Apostle would have them understand that they were exposed to danger of a similar nature - a seducing power of Satan leading men into apostasy. "Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The presence of these proved that it was already "the last time." Failure had to come into Christianity. Seducing spirits were leading men into apostasy. This would culminate at the end in the great apostasy under the man of sin, which will bring down the judgment of God on apostate Jews and on apostate Christendom. Thus we may recognize the last time. Antichrists had gone out from among Christians. They were not true Christians, and never had been, else they would

have remained. Their going out manifested their true character. They were apostates, enemies, and liars, because they denied that Jesus was the Christ. This is the spirit of antichrist, and so the Apostle calls them "antichrists." They might not deny openly the Father, but they denied the Son, and "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same bath not the Father." They were seducers of the people of God, as all false teachers are.

But the babes in Christ are not without resource in the presence of these false teachers. Their going out from among Christians might tend to shake the faith of the babes, and their subtle arguments might seem difficult to answer, but the babes have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. They know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which they have received abides in them, and they need not that any man teach them. They have that in them by which they are able to discern the truth, and reject all that is opposed to it. It is not that they do not need teaching, for the Apostle is very carefully teaching them in this very scripture. But they do not need man's teaching. The Holy Ghost teaches them, and fortifies them against false doctrine. God may use an instrument, but the teaching must be divine. There is the action of the Holy Ghost, both in the instrument and in the one who is taught. "The same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." It is by the Holy Ghost that the teaching is given and received. He is in the babes, and is truth, and is no lie; thus the babes can discern the truth, and detect what is false. Weak though they may be, the Holy Ghost is able to keep them from the seductions of the enemy. But this connects itself with another most important principle; namely, that of cleaving to the truth we have already received - the truth in which the Person of Christ has been revealed to our souls.

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

We have received Christ the Son of God in receiving the truth, for He is the truth and He is that which was from the beginning. If this abides in us, we abide in the Son and in the Father. There is living and abiding dependence on Christ - cleaving to Him as our life, and as the sum of all truth and of all blessing. The Holy Ghost - the anointing - is the power of all this, connecting Himself with the truth in our souls, and at once challenging every lie that seeks entrance. This then is the security of the babes against false teaching. We are to cleave to Christ, and give heed to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, who connects Himself with the truth in us, and resists all that is not of the truth, who "is truth, and is no lie." By Him we know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth.

The Lord keep us, beloved brethren, in these last and closing days, when error in every form is stalking abroad like a noisome pestilence, before which many fall as victims. May we be content with the truth, and the truth alone. All that is not of the truth is a lie, and of Satan, the enemy of all truth. If we have the truth, we have Christ, the Son, and in Him the Father; and we have the Holy Ghost as the power of it in our souls. What would we have more? Is not this enough until we reach the glory itself? Even there Christ will be all.

An Aged Apostle's Message to His Children: the Young Men

An Aged Apostle's Message To His Children, THE YOUNG MEN

We have already seen that the fathers are characterized by having "known Him that is from the beginning." Here (1 John 2:13) we learn that the young men are characterized by having "overcome the wicked one. In his second address to the young men he mentions the secret of their strength, and warns them against the world. Loving the world and loving the Father are incompatible. All the elements which make the world what it is, have their source in the world, not in the Father. And then the world passes away, and its lust, while he that does the will of God abides forever.

Let us notice these several points.

1. The young men have overcome the wicked one. The strength of divine life is in them and, in the conflicts they have sustained with the enemy, they have been crowned with victory. It is not that all conflict is ended, and all danger past, but they have realized in conflict a power which is superior to that of the enemy. If they have a powerful foe, they know and possess a power greater than his, which they have, and to use, and the enemy is put to flight. They are characterized by this remarkable fact, that they "have overcome the wicked one. Satan who rules the darkness of this world, and who is the great enemy of God's people, cannot stand before these young men. This is a wondrous fact that may well fill us with holy boldness and courage in meeting this relentless and untiring foe.

2. The divine life, directed by the Word of God, is the secret of strength in the young men. "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. In Eph. 6, where it is a question of conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness, the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. This is the source of all strength for conflict. In ourselves we have no strength, but in Him we are strong. Christ is the believer's life, and this is directed in the believer by the Word of God. Against this, Satan has no power. When Satan meets Christ in the believer, he meets One who has already vanquished him, and destroyed his power. In death (expression of utter weakness) Christ destroyed him who had the power of death; so that the weakness of Christ is stronger than the power of Satan. Satan did his worst against Christ at the cross, but Christ is risen from the dead in the power of a life that Satan could not touch. Resurrection proclaimed complete, eternal victory for Christ. Satan well knows that he is a vanquished foe and that, at the appointed time, Christ will cast him into the lake of fire. If we meet Satan, therefore, in the power of Christ, he immediately flees. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

It is not only that Christ has personally gained the victory over Satan, but He did this for our deliverance. He took part in flesh and blood, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14, 15. In the death of Christ, all that Satan could use to terrify the

conscience, as well as all that could bring down the judgment of God, was swept away; and thus the believer is emancipated from the condition of bondage and fear into which he had been plunged by sin and the power of Satan.

But this is not all. The believer is made a partaker of divine life. He possesses the very life in which Christ's victory over Satan was displayed - life in resurrection - life as Christ imparted it to His disciples when He breathed on them after His resurrection - life in the Spirit. Christ was made alive in the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18); the believer lives in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and he has "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as a delivering power (Rom. 8:2). It is life in Christ, of which the Holy Ghost is the spring and power in the believer. This life, Satan cannot touch. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18.

In this divine life lies the secret of the young men's strength. They have the energy of Christ in them, and the Word of God abiding in them, directing the divine life ac-

cording to all that He is as an object filling the heart, and governing its desires. The Word of God expresses what that life is in all its varied characteristics; and if the Word abides in us, it forms the heart by filling it with Christ as an object, reproducing in us, His life; as Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ." And if this is what Satan finds in us, what can he do? He is in the presence of One who has already conquered him, and he can only flee.

How blessed then to "abide in Him," as the Apostle exhorts in verse 28, and to have God's Word abiding in us, as in verse 14, so that we may always be able to overcome the wicked one. The power of Satan has been broken in the cross, but he has many wiles, and these we need to withstand. "We are not ignorant of his devices," as the Apostle said to the Corinthians, and we need to watch lest he "get an advantage" (2 Cor. 2:11). Our safety lies in having God's Word abiding in us. It is this that forms the heart, according to Christ, and directs the movements of the divine life in the soul. It becomes also the sword of the Spirit to the Christian warrior, and enables him to repel every assault of the wicked one. The Word is the Word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32); and it is also the sword of the Spirit. May we prize it, both for what it gives us, and for what it preserves us against.

3. We now have a warning against the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is indeed a solemn word for any Christian whose heart is set upon anything in this world. Love of the world and love of the Father do not go together. They are opposed to each other in every way. The world has murdered God's Son, and this has revealed its state of utter enmity against God. God has indeed raised Him up from the dead, and crowned Him with glory and honor at His own right hand; and the Holy Ghost has come down to witness to the fact of His resurrection, and of His exaltation to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins; but the world rejects Him still. Christ is not of the world. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" are of the world; but Christ is of the Father, and the world has hated Him, and cast Him out.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our blessed Lord Jesus is rejected in this world. Go where you will - into the busy throng, society, fashionable circles, even among the mass of professing Christians - and talk of Christ or His things, and there is no relish for it, no response in people's

hearts. They turn away, or their mouths are closed. Many a professing Christian is dumb the moment Christ's name is mentioned. And in many instances conversation on this topic will not be tolerated, while the most insignificant bit of neighborhood gossip will be borne or even relished. Anything and everything but Christ! The very name - the thought of Him even - is distasteful.

And not only is there no heart to receive Christ, but there is positive enmity against Him. By the verdict of this world Jesus was delivered up to die, and was nailed as a malefactor to the cross. People may say now that the Jews and Pilate did that, and may thus seek to clear themselves of all responsibility. But Pilate was the representative of the world power at Jerusalem when he delivered Jesus up to die, and thus involved the world in the guilt of that terrible deed. Has the world ever repented of this awful sin? Let its own course answer. A message from heaven has been calling to repentance, but the world has not repented. For more than eighteen hundred years God has been, as it were, beseeching men to be reconciled, but the world remains still in enmity. Through grace individuals have repented, and have been reconciled to God; but the world, "like the deaf 'adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," has no ear to hear, and continues in its course, ruled by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

The world is guilty of the blood of Jesus, and yet goes on amusing itself as if nothing had happened. The hum of business, the cares of life, the sound of the harp and the organ, the theater, the concert, the ball, and the ten thousand varieties of amusement, worldly pleasures, and worldly follies, are used of Satan to ensnare his victims, and drown the cry of guilt in the conscience until death carries them away, or judgment closes over the scene.

Beloved brethren, are we practically outside of all this? Have we found God's Christ in glory an object that so fills and satisfies the heart, that for us the world has lost all its charms? Where are our hearts? where are our affections? Are they with Christ in glory? or with the world that crucified Him?

But perhaps some reader of these lines is saying to himself, "It is impossible that this world which has rejected and slain my blessed Lord should draw away my heart from Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." But this is the very danger to which the young men are exposed. It is this that they are warned against, and if there had been no danger there would have been no warning. There is that in us which answers to the world, and nothing but the Word of God abiding in us, and keeping us in communion with Christ, can preserve us from its allurements. The Apostle Paul had to record of one who had labored with him, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. Sorrowful words! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. An apostle's presence was not enough to keep Demas. Our strength is only in Christ. If we abide in Him, and His Word abide in us, we shall be kept securely. Otherwise our hearts will be drawn away, and we shall find our affections entangled in a world that is far from God. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" is written upon all that is under the sun, and all is estranged from God. The fathers have learned this experimentally, but the young men have it yet to learn; and unless they abide in their stronghold, having the sword in readiness, they will surely be overcome by the wiles of the devil.

4. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The judgment of God is coming upon this world, both as a system that has fallen under the power

of Satan, and as a physical world that has been ruined by the presence of sin. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words of the Lord Jesus shall not pass away. The world may go on with its business, its pleasures, its follies and its sins, forgetting its guilt in murdering God's Son; but God has not forgotten. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord with a heart like adamant, guilty of his brother's blood which cried from the ground, and sought to make himself happy in a world far from God. Hundreds of years

rolled on, and the descendants of Cain multiplied on the earth. A city was built, the sound of the hammer was heard on brass and iron, and the harp and the organ made mirth for those whose hearts knew not God. Thus the world moved on in its course, and perhaps Abel and his blood were quite forgotten; but the flood came and swept them all away.

The blood of Christ indeed speaks better things than the blood of Abel. It cries from the throne and speaks pardon and peace to every repentant sinner. The redeemed in glory, and the gathering of Israel, and the blessing of the nations in a future day, all witness that the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel. But the rejection of that Savior, and the shedding of that blood, have crowned the world's guilt; and He who once came in grace, will come again in judgment. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. This is terrible indeed to think of, but it will come as surely as the flood came in the days of Noah. It is the state of the world in its enmity against God that will bring down this judgment. O beloved brethren, have we learned the true character of this world? Have we seen it in the light of the cross as the scene of Satan's power, and characterized by unrelentless enmity against the Son of God? Are our hearts

far away from this scene of evil over which God's judgment is about to sweep as a flame of fire? "Remember Lot's wife." She was outside of Sodom, but her heart was in the doomed scene, and she looked back, and became a monument of God's judgment. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Peter goes farther and tells us not only of the judgment of the wicked, but of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth as well. The old world perished by water in the days of Noah. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:7, 10.

Thus, reader, we have God's estimate of the world, and His judgment of it. It is morally corrupt and guilty of the blood of God's well beloved Son, and it is doomed to judgment. However bright its allurements, however attractive its charms, and however great its promises of good, Satan is behind it all with his enchantments to charm and to seduce his victims, and make them slaves to his power. "The whole world lies in the wicked one." 1 John 5:19 (N. Trans.). May the Lord keep us from listening to the voice of the charmer. May we so cleave to Christ that Satan can have no power against us. This is our only safety. If the heart is full of Christ, and God's Word abides in us, forming the heart and governing all its movements, Satan with all his allurements through the world will be driven back. Thus it was with Christ. Satan found nothing in Him but the Word of God. It was the sword of the Spirit. Three times over he was made to feel the edge of that trusty blade, "It is written," "It is written," "It is written," and his enchantments had no power. Alas! too often he finds something else in us - "lust of the flesh," "lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life," and then we fall a prey to his seductions, and have to learn by bitter experience what the world is, and the folly of giving it a place in our hearts and by which we do the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

All Things to All Men: 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

1 Cor. 9:19-22

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

This teaches us the exquisite lesson of self-denial in order to meet the condition of others with a direct view to their salvation. This passage is frequently used for the direct opposite; namely, for self-indulgence, and mixing ourselves up with all sorts of wrong things, under the plea of being "all things to all men"; and in result, instead of gaining them and delivering them out of the evil and folly in which they are involved, we fall under the power of these things ourselves, to the great dishonor of our Lord and the serious damage of souls.

Antidote for Worry

I know right well the deep abyss of gloom that, like an atmosphere, surrounds the human heart; and I know, too, how often even physical weakness lets one drop into it, and how hard it is to shake it off. Our strength is gone and often we "wist it not," so that I always say to myself, "Take care! ward it off in the beginning." If one gives way, one drops deeper and deeper into it, into the thing of all others most fallen, most afar from God - a dark, brooding, human heart. The Lord is very pitiful to such a one, very tender and gracious, but if (as has been said) I have all the grace of Christ, I have no business to give way as if it were not "sufficient." What oppresses me today will be gone tomorrow, but a glimpse of Christ, the felt answer of His heart in the moment of oppression, will last until tomorrow, and the next day, forever and forever. Shame on the heart that can go down so low for the worry of the moment, and rise so little to the realities that are to last forever.

Are We Expecting Our Lord?

Do we really expect, wait for, the return of our Lord? Is this our constant attitude of soul? Just as a man may read the Scriptures and, seeing clearly, assent to the truth that all are guilty sinners and yet never take the place of such before God for himself, so is it possible to hold the doctrine of the second coming of Christ with out being influenced by it. In' deed, we might be able even to state the truth to others without one particle of response to its claims. We need to challenge ourselves on this point. Are we then, we ask again, in the power of the expectation of seeing our blessed Lord? Is this blessed hope daily before our souls? Does it govern our actions? mold our conduct? Does it detach us from the world and worldliness? show us the vanity of the world's distinctions, manners, and ways?

The Apostle Paul could write of some in his day, "In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:8-10. Would this description in any measure be true of us? Do our ways before the world proclaim that we have no resting place here? that we are only sojourners waiting to be fetched by our Lord? Do our homes and households, in their ordering and arrangement, proclaim this blessed truth? In a word, is this the testimony of our lives, of our walk and ways?

Questions like these may soon be answered, if we are honest with ourselves, and the very attempt to answer them would lead to blessing. For in how many instances would it lead to the painful discovery that with this truth on our lips we have been denying it in the life; that while we have been saying that we are but strangers and pilgrims here, we have been settling down in ease and comfort, making plans for worldly advancement, if not for ourselves yet for our families, seeking to raise ourselves higher in the social scale, and striking root in every direction in the soil of this world? Is it not possible that God has a controversy with us on this account? that this will explain the sorrows that have befallen us - the sicknesses that have so often visited ourselves and our families? For God must have reality with His people. He loves them too well to permit them to go on in self-deception - deceiving themselves and deceiving others also. Therefore He is speaking to us by His manifold dealings and chastenings, warning us of our danger, and recalling us to the sense of our responsibility as His witnesses in this world. May He Himself give us the opened ear to His voice, that we may humble ourselves before Him in lowly abasement and self-judgment, and seek His restoring grace, so that in all the fervor of our first love we may testify once again in living power to the truth of our Lord's return.

Another observation may be permitted. Nothing so tends to obscure our vision of the bright and morning star as the thought that signs are to be expected before He descends from heaven. We have been plied with temptations of this character. Voices other than that of the Good Shepherd have beguiled even saints. Pyramids and conjunctions of planets (which after all were of no

extraordinary kind) have been adduced to prove that the Lord is at hand. The carnal wisdom of men has thus been allied with the teachings of the Word of God. If we build upon such things our faith will soon be rudely shaken. God needs no confirmation from, nor will He be indebted to, men. These things, indeed, are a wile of the enemy to divert our gaze from the coming One to circumstances or to earthly events. No; our hope rests alone on Christ and His Word. According to the words of a French hymn, "He has promised, He will return"; this, and this alone, is the foundation of the "blessed hope." It is quite true that the moral characteristics of the "perilous times" will be discerned by the instructed soul, but these are detected by a knowledge of the Word of God. Our danger lies in being lured from the voice of our living Lord to listen to the words of men. The more we are shut up to the Lord Himself and His own Word, the more intense will be our expectation of His coming.

To some it may seem that He has tarried long. But if He yet wait, it is but while God is still working in the activities of His grace to gather in His elect - the coheirs with Christ. While therefore He would have us to be ever waiting and ever expecting, it must be in full fellowship with His own heart. If we wait, He also waits; if we desire His return, much more ardently does He look forward to the moment when He will rise from His seat to claim His own. But the moments of waiting will soon be over. Louder and louder the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and it is He Himself who puts this word into our lips, while He responds, "Surely I come quickly."

What then can we do but bow our heads in His presence as we reply, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

"And now, at length, behold, He comes

claim thee from above,

In answer to the ceaseless call,

And deep desire of love.

"Go, then, thou loved and blessed one;

Thou drooping mourner, rise!

Go; for He calls thee now to share

His dwelling in the skies.

"For thee, His royal bride, for thee,

His brightest glories shine;

And, happier still, His changeless heart,

With all its love, is thine."

As He Is in the Light: God Revealed

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

Of old, God said "He would dwell in the thick darkness." 1 Kings 8:12. When He gave the law from Sinai, the mountain "burned with fire," and God was surrounded with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest." In the tabernacle and temple He dwelt between the cherubim, behind a veil, in unapproachable majesty. God was unrevealed and could not be approached.

Now, blessed be His name, it is no longer thus. That solemn question has been divinely settled in the sacrifice of Christ. All God's claims have been fully met. His majesty has been maintained - all His nature fully glorified in the death of Jesus, so that when Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Indeed, the veil was Jesus' flesh (Heb. 10:20), in the rending of which God was revealed, coming down to meet man's need in that wondrous sacrifice, revealed in light, and known as a Savior God. In mercy to man He remained hidden until He could manifest Himself in the light, on the ground of that perfect sacrifice in which His righteousness and holiness were declared, as well as His unspeakable love to man. In that wondrous act in which man's sin was atoned for on the cross, God stood revealed in light, at once displaying His majesty and inflexible holiness in the judgment of sin, and His immeasurable love to man in providing for him the sacrifice that has put away his sin.

God has rent the veil and revealed Himself in grace, in cloudless light, to bring man to Himself in that light. It is in the sacrifice of Jesus, His beloved Son. On the ground of that sacrifice, God and man meet together in light which has no element of darkness in it, all guilt and sin gone forever, so that man can be in His presence in abiding and eternal relationship founded on this immovable basis: "THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN."

Wondrous statement! We meet God in the light. The blood of Jesus is there. It has answered every question, met every claim, it "cleanseth us from all sin." The cloudless light and glory of God's presence can discover no spot, where that blood has been applied. If the light could be brighter still, it would manifest but the more clearly that there is not a spot upon us, that all is gone, and that we are in the presence of God in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable value of the blood of Jesus. Oh! what a revelation is this! What infinite grace! What unspeakable love! And oh! what rest and peace for our once weary hearts and guilty consciences!

Consciously brought into such a scene, well may we bow our heads in adoring worship.

But there is yet more than this. The scene into which we are brought is one where there is no element of darkness, no discord, no jarring note. We are in the light, and walk in it. Once we were in darkness and walked in darkness - walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. But we are no longer there. We are now in the light and walk there.

And now what is so blessed is that "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." How could it be otherwise? We are brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Here there can be but one mind, one thought - the mind of God, of Christ. It is an abstract statement of what belongs to the light into which we are brought, and where we walk. All is looked at according to the presence and nature of God, where there is no disturbing element to produce jarring or discord. There we walk in the light as He is in the light, and we have fellowship one with another. We are brought to God, are in the light, have eternal life, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. How immense the blessing! and how blessed the privileges! All is divinely perfect and without any flaw, and proclaims the pure grace and infinite love of God. Such is the truth presented to us in its abstract perfection according to the nature of God and His manifestation in grace; and the heart utters its praise to Him, and takes in the blessed revelation.

The life that has been manifested, and which is given to us, is perfect. The cleansing power of the blood of Jesus which enables us to subsist in the presence of God is perfect. Perfect and cloudless the light into which we are brought. And perfect the fellowship we have with God, and with one another, in the light, according to the relationship in which God has set us as His own children.

Now there is one more question before we close. How far are we living and walking in the power of this truth? This is the practical side for everyone who has been brought to God. Thus truth is the standard God has given us. Do we want a lower standard? Do we want something now that we shall not have in the joy and brightness and eternal blessedness of the Father's house? It only shows how little our souls have drunk in the truth. How the truth lays our hearts bare! If we brought our motives, our desires, our ways, our walk, into the presence of God, to measure and weigh all in the light, should we not be on our faces in confession before Him who "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? Nor could He fail us, cleansing as well as forgiving; not only giving us a standing in the light in virtue of the blood of Jesus, but cleansing our ways by His purifying Word, according to the place we are in - cleansing from "all unrighteousness" as well as from "all sin." May His Word even now search our hearts and lead us to the judgment of all that will not bear the test of the light.

Atonement Is Necessary for Salvation

We have noticed in previous issues that some of the earliest attacks against the truth of Christianity were directed against the Person of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. But another pernicious error sprang up early in the fifth century. It was directed against the truth that man is an utterly lost sinner, that his condition is hopeless apart from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. While the former sought to undermine the deity of the Savior, the latter said that such a Savior was not necessary. Both are alike ruinous. The one would deprive us of the Savior and the other blind the eyes of men to their great need of the Savior.

This error was introduced by a man named Pelagius and his follower Celestius. They began to circulate their evil teachings cautiously in and around Rome, but later went over to Africa and then into Palestine and spread them far and wide. God, however, raised up a bold and faithful witness for the truth to withstand the evil - Augustine, "the famous bishop of Hippo." He assailed the Pelagian doctrines with his pen and brought out more scriptural views of the gospel than had been taught since the days of the apostles.

The evil teachings of Pelagius and Celestius contain basically the same error that is found so generally in Christendom today. They form a system that makes new birth, repentance, and salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ unnecessary, for they claim that there is inherent good in mankind, and consequently all that a man needs is to be cultivated, and let the good show itself. Some "modern" clerics assert that good is a native quality of man. Now we do not hesitate to call this teaching a lie of the devil, no matter who propounds it, be they Pelagius and Celestius of the fifth century or the celebrated doctors of divinity of the twentieth century.

Pelagius taught that when Adam sinned he did not pull down the race with him, but that his posterity was born in the same innocence in which he was created. Now there is not a fact of Scripture more definitely stated than that Adam sinned and the whole race fell with him. God says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"; and "By one man's offense death reigned by one"; and, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5:12, 17, 19.) When God looked on mankind in the days of Noah, He said that the imaginations of his heart were "only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), and after the flood He said, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Even the cleansing of the earth by the flood had not changed the evil of man's heart.

Man is no longer born in innocence but in sin. The newborn infant will soon display the fruits of a fallen nature. When man fell, he fell spirit, soul, and body. His spirit and soul were estranged from God, and his body came under the curse, and death began its dreaded work. Death which is seen all around is the result of sin - "The wages of sin is death." Even infants die; they who have not yet been able to commit sin are subject to it, because they are born in that condition. Does anyone require evidence of that which is so universally manifest?

Another Pelagian lie was that man is free and able to choose the good and do it, that he has a perfectly free will and ability to perform the good he desires. Now the Word of God makes it abundantly clear that we are not only born in sin, but that in ourselves we are utterly powerless to extricate ourselves. The epistle to the Romans describes in some detail the evidences and proof of man's lost condition, and concludes that we were "without strength" to free ourselves. There was absolutely nothing that we could do to lift ourselves out of the mire into which we had fallen; but thanks be to God, it was when we were without strength that God came in. We read, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5:6.

Man is much more ready to admit that he has sinned, or even that he is godless, than that he is powerless - lost, hopelessly lost. God has provided a Savior and salvation for him, but they are only available when he admits his condition and turns to God in repentance. It was "in due time" that Christ died for the ungodly; that was after man had proved for 4000 years that he was powerless. God tried man in many ways and under different conditions. He even gave a certain race His holy law and dwelt in their midst, but every fresh trial only added proof to the solemn fact that man in the flesh cannot please God. Yes, it was "in due time" - when all tests proved man to be hopelessly lost that "God sent forth His Son," and that "Christ died for the ungodly." Surely if there had been any other means of saving the lost sinner God would not have provided the way He did at such a tremendous cost to Himself.

Another view of the sinner's condition is found in the epistle to the Ephesians. There he is viewed as "dead in sins," and under the power of Satan; that is, dead morally toward God without one movement of his heart toward Him and yet living and walking "according the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." How can one who is dead save himself? How can one who has not one desire toward God please God? If man, active in sins as in Romans, is "without strength," then when he is morally dead he is hopeless. What a sad condition! But there is something still further that makes his condition even worse, and that is, he is Satan's slave. Pelagius may boast of man's free will to do good, but this scripture lets us know that his will is not free, for he is in bondage under the god and prince of this world - Satan - who is the "strong man" of Luke 11:21, who keeps his goods - sinners - in peace, false peace.

The only hope for lost sinners is to be found in God Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ. When we read the otherwise despairing picture in Rom. 5 about man's lack of strength, it is followed by these memorable words, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8. Yes, He came in when we were lost and powerless to improve our lot. And when we were described as dead in our sins, and led captive by Satan, we read, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)" Eph. 2:4, 5. Let us praise God for those blessed words, "But God."

Pelagius made a great deal of man's responsibility. Now that man is responsible we do not deny, but surely he cannot be responsible to save himself when God has said that it is impossible. For what then is he responsible? Just this - to bow before God and acknowledge that what He says is true. "God... now commandeth all men every where to repent." Acts 17:30. What then is repentance? It is not some meritorious act by which we can lift ourselves to God, but rather it is

that judgment of ourselves which is formed in the presence of God according to His Word. It is seen in the returning prodigal when he said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." When a sinner does as the dejected publican who smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he is in the place where God can and will bless him. But, alas, there are few today who bow to the truth and take their proper place before God. They much prefer to believe the Pelagian lie, now called "modernism." But really, what is modern about something that was circulated back in the fifth century? There is really nothing modern about modernism, except its name. It is the same old unbelief that prefers the age-old lie to God's immutable truth.

The reason so few believe and bow to the truth of God may be found in the words of the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus. After giving him that basic gospel annunciation of John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" He adds: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." vv. 19, 20.

Satan is the ruler of the moral darkness of this world; that darkness is positively preferred to God's light. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5. Because men's deeds are evil they avoid the light; they prefer to remain in the darkness rather than to be brought into the light and face the fact that they are sinners before a holy God. They are more comfortable in the darkness, for there they are not reminded of their condition; they prefer to forget it. Therefore the devil's lie, extolling man's inherent good and his ability to perform it, is relished because it acts as an opiate to calm a troubled conscience. But insensibility to the danger ahead is not by any means immunity from it; God has decreed:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

But what a blessed contrast is the portion of the ones who have obeyed the gospel: "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.... Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:16, 17.

Backsliding in Heart: First Stages of Declension

Jer. 2; 3; 4

I have very much laid on my mind, I trust by the Lord, the subject of backsliding. You do not find the word in the New Testament, but you find the thing. And I suppose we have not, any of us, very far to look to find the thing in our own history.

The scriptures referred to at the head of this chapter give a beautiful unfolding of the deep distress it is to the Lord if His people are not near Him. And this is always true as a principle. Ah, beloved, nothing can satisfy the heart of the Lord Jesus but having you and me near Him. And nothing can satisfy our hearts but being near Him, for "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Pro. 14:14. It does not say the backslider outwardly, but the backslider in heart.

How wise is God to say, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Pro. 4:23. Again, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." Pro. 23:7. It is not what I do, or what I say with my lips, but what I really am, what my heart is, what the affections are occupied with. I believe we are in a day when intelligence goes very far ahead of the heart. I shall not be speaking too plainly if I say, The secret of the want of a great deal of spiritual power is pride of heart. Hence would I say before God, Let us beware of backsliding in heart. God must have reality.

Now look at these three exceedingly interesting chapters of Jeremiah. They show you that in days gone by God had a people whom He loved with a very deep love -a love He was continually expressing. They show also the beautiful way in which He seeks to win His people back to Himself, after they have wandered. Nothing could be more touching. Look at the deep toned affection of God for His people! In the people themselves too we may see the picture of what our own hearts are, and the only way, when they have wandered from God, of getting back.

Now God's way of dealing with a backslider is surely not our way. God's way is beautiful and perfect. There had been a great outward revival in the days of Josiah the king (2 Chron. 34; 35). But God looked underneath, and He saw that it was only feigned. "Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD." Jer. 3:10. The revival was not genuine. And therefore Jeremiah is selected to bring this word to them!

"Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of His increase; all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD." Jer. 2:1.3.

Eight hundred and fifty years had rolled by since that people, in obedience to God, had turned their backs upon Egypt and its fleshpots, and had come out to the Lord. They were holiness to the Lord then. They were then a separate people for the Lord. I love to see the affection of soul, and the energy, and fervency, that mark a young convert.

Let us ask our hearts if we are as fresh as in the first weeks we were saved. Oh, you say, I know a great deal more now. Is the simple love of Jesus, the delight in Jesus, the practical holiness, and the desire to be anything and everything for Him the same as it was then? You may have forgotten that early thrill of affection, but God has not forgotten. He says, I have not forgotten their early love. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me." Where? Into a wilderness. When they crossed the Red Sea they were in a desert. What was in the desert? Only two things. What were they? God and the sand, nothing else.

I think the second chapter of Jeremiah is very like the second chapter of Revelation. The Lord there says to the church of Ephesus, "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Rev. 2:4 (N. Trans.). It is not lost thy first love. I do not think that is a scriptural thought. It is "left thy first love." Something has come in, says that blessed Lover in Revelation 2, that has eclipsed Me, and all your affection for Me. Ah, beloved, where are our souls as regards Christ? Well, if conscience smites, and the heart is sensible of a bit of declension, it is a grand thing for us to know it.

The great sin of Israel was that decay existed, but they knew it not. God had already years before addressed them by another prophet, Hosea, saying, "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Hos. 7:8, 9. When a man sees gray hairs in his head, he is conscious that old age in that sense is setting in. Israel (the ten tribes, called in the prophets "Ephraim") had already grievously declined, but knew it not.

Let me implore you, especially the young believers, to beware of backsliding. The first movement toward it is that something comes in to intercept the enjoyment of the love of Christ, and your heart loses its sweet apprehension of His love and grace. You have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. I think Paul brings the same thought before us when he says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11; 2; 3 It was a great exercise to the beloved Apostle that day, lest anything should come in to make Christ less precious to them. To the Thessalonians also he says, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." 1 Thess. 3:8. You turn back, says Paul, and I shall die of grief.

Are these lines in the hand of a backslider? Do I hear you saying, I have gotten away from the Lord? It is good that you know it. We do not always know it. The Lord knows it, and ever seeks to bring us back. To effect this, does He chide? No. He may have to rebuke and chasten. But that which restores is His Word. I do not forget your devotedness; you may have forgotten it, but it was sweet to Me, says the Lord, so I have never forgotten the hour when you came to Me, and I was everything to you. By a word like this He sought to recover Israel and, beloved friend, it is the same with the Lord today! He is yesterday, and today, and forever the same.

When Israel emerged from Egypt they had a deep sense of the Lord's care and protection. "Thus saith the LORD, what iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?" Jer. 2:5, 6. What a touching plea for the Lord to

bring before His people. Had He altered since that day? Ah no, there was no change on His side. They had lost His presence, and they were insensible of the loss. "Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?" They had alike forgotten the grace of the Lord, and the kindness of the Lord.

Now comes God's arraignment. "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled My land, and made Mine heritage an abomination." v. 7. He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan, but somehow or other they had lost all touch with God, and had fallen into gross idolatry. "The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." v. 8. Such was the low state in Israel. Priests, pastors, prophets, and people had alike forgotten the Lord. We have here full-blown backsliding in heart. There are many believers in such a state today, alas!

If the joy of the love of Christ has passed away, my dear friend, you are very miserable in your soul. Things are in a very, very sad state. Yes, but stop. The Lord wants you to be right, just as you will see He sought to put Israel right.

And now He says, "Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." vv. 9-13. This is His plea. Did ever the nations - the heathen - do what My people have done? My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. You will find all through Scripture that that which profits is the great point. If there has been departure from God, has it profited you?

The things of time and sense, the business, the duties, and even the cares of life we have to face; if they eclipse Christ, is it profitable? Ask your own heart. It will say, No! emphatically. That is a striking word, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Psalm 106:15. Do you want the world? You shall have it. God never demands devotedness. The two going to Emmaus had to constrain the Lord to come in. Christ will never force His company. They constrained Him to come in, "and He went in to tarry with them" (see Luke 24:13-32). True, the love of Christ constrains us first, but He loves to be valued.

My friend, there is no food for the soul, no peace, no rest, away from Christ. You may have gotten on in the world; you may have secured the things you put out your hands for; but what have you paid for them? What about the Lord, the love of the Lord, the company and fellowship of Christ, and the sense in your soul, I am just in this scene for Him. If you have lost that, there is no profit. Is it not an extraordinary thing that God calls on the heavens to gaze on a backsliding people (v. 12)? "They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters." Ah, what a lovely title, "fountain of living waters." What a wonderful thing to be in touch with the fountain of living waters. How God brings Himself before us in all the freshness of His Grace, and the living energy of His love. "And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." v. 13. Broken cisterns! It does not

matter whether they be big or small. The point is, if my object be not Christ, it is a broken cistern. Alas! how many saints today are trying to drink at broken cisterns. A broken cistern cannot hold water. Anything short of Christ will fail to satisfy my thirst.

This indictment is followed by a touching query. "Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?" v. 14. How can this be? Out of Egypt have I called My son, was Gods word long before (Exod. 4:23; Hos. 11:1). He had been a slave, and God had set him free. "Why is he spoiled?" Is the one who is free, and in the sense of God's love, is that soul to go back to bondage?

It was so in Israel's case, the trouble and sorrow came on them in retributive judgment. It was all their own doing. God keep us from backsliding. Whoever you are, be set for Christ, I beseech you, and let nothing come in to divert your heart from Him.

Read this second chapter of Jeremiah carefully. Follow it out for yourself, and note how God seeks to get at the conscience as well as the heart. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when He led thee by the way?" v. 17. All that came upon them was the fruit of their own doing. -Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:7, 8. We cannot sow a handful of seed without the crop which that-seed produces coming up.

"What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" v. 18. After their redemption, neither Egypt nor Assyria had aught to do with. Israel till they got away from God. But their hearts, away from God, yearned for evil association, and received their due reward. Most truly does God say, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts." v. 19. Now here is the first time we get the word "backsliding." Then in the 6th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, and 22nd verses of chapter 3 you get the expression. It is the characteristic word in the early part of Jeremiah. But then it supposes recovery, and that the heart will be turned back again to God, because that is what the Lord wants. He longs to have us very near Him. And do not our hearts love to be near Him? But if I am away from Him, and His hand is on me, I cannot blame Him. Is the blame His? Ah no, I know Him too well to say that.

If there has been departure of heart from the Lord, "My fear is not in thee" (v. 19) is true of that heart. I think that is one of the first steps of departure; the sense of the fear of the Lord somehow dies out in the soul, and then declension develops.

But it is of no use for a backslider to try and put things right outwardly. That is the next point. External washing will not do. It is the inside - the heart - that must be put right. "For though thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord GOD." v. 22. Then He turns to show how they were like the "wild ass" (v. 24), and like the thief who is found out (v. 26), they were "ashamed" because they had gone into downright idolatry (v. 27). How God knows what our hearts are! If we get never so far away from the Lord, should trouble and sorrow come, what should we do? The Lord tells us, "In the time of their trouble they

will say, Arise, and save us." v. 27. Well may He reply, "But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble." v. 28. Let the thing that you have been occupied with deliver you. That cannot be.

Nothing could be more touching than God's next query here:

"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" v. 31. Was I barren? Was there barrenness in My land? Is there barrenness in heavenly things? What a striking expression for God to use to His people! But that is what it is. If the heart loses the sense of grace, it loses its delight in Christ, and "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numb. 21:5), is the sure result.

Then He adds, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet My people have forgotten Me days without number." v. 32. What had He done every day? Watched over and cared for them. Yes, blessed be His name, He had continually thought of them. We have forgotten Him perhaps but He has never forgotten us. We are graven on the very palms of His hands, and the one thing He has before His mind is to have the backsliders brought back. Even although their sin was as deep as that, we read, "Yet return again to Me, saith the LORD." Jer. 3:1. So deep was His desire for their restoration.

Backslider! He then called them, and bid them come back. Now He calls you back. If anyone asks, How can I get back? you say, I feel God has spoken to my soul through His Word, I am drinking at broken cisterns, how am I to get back? Listen. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (v. 13). There is only one way back, and what is it? Confession. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. How touchingly tender is the call. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you." v. 14. There was no break of relationship on God's part. See too how He encourages the heart in verse 15. It is really lovely, beloved, the way in which the Lord seeks to recover and link the soul with Himself.

If that blessed response to the call does not take place, do you know what will follow? Things will get worse. If we do not heed the recalling word, we shall reach the 6th verse of chapter 5. I think God graphically describes to us in this book what is bound to follow if backsliding is not checked. "Their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased." v. 6. How solemn!

There is only one way of deliverance from this terrible downgrade path of the backslider. It is by honest acknowledgment of the state, and by simply looking to God for deliverance. It is thus voiced: "O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee." Jer. 14:7. Do not suppose, my dear friend, that if there has been distance and departure from the Lord, it is all over with you, and that you cannot be restored. Oh no, there are brighter and better days in store for you if you return. I believe God brings us into deeper and fuller communion. I think His grace brings us into the enjoyment of a deeper, fuller, and more blessed place in His affections. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon" (Hos. 14:7), are wonderful figures of the brightness and freshness of a restored soul. When restored, that soul says, like Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" To this God rejoins, "I have heard him, and observed him. Then says Ephraim, 'I am like a green fir tree.' A fir tree is one of the finest things you ever saw.

It is green all the year round. It is the soul in the sense that it is in all the favor of God, and the love of the Lord is prized beyond everything.

But God says, "From Me is thy fruit found." You see that in verse 8 you have a dialog. There is repentance and a conscious sense of blessing all flowing from God.

Balance: Gathering or Scattering

Saints, like other men, are apt to be one-sided. It looks spiritual to choose the highest line and stand on the loftiest point and fancy oneself to be safe in that heavenly elevation. On the other hand, it seems loving to steer clear of the church question so constantly abused to gratify ambition, if not spite and jealousy (and thus scattering saints instead of uniting them holily around the Lord's name), and to devote all one's energies, in the present broken state of Christendom, to the good news which wins souls to God from destruction. But this is to surrender the nearest circle of Christ's affections and honor. The only course that is right, holy, and faithful, is to hold to all that is precious in His eyes - to love the Church with all its consequences on the one hand, and on the other to go out to all mankind in the grace that would reflect the light of a Savior God.

The Best Things in the World

The tendency of everything, even the best on this earth, is to make us forget that we do not belong to it. You may think that very sweeping; but I repeat, it does not matter what it is, even the best thing that belongs to this world has the tendency to make us forget that we do not belong to it. Thus everything becomes a test to us; mercies test us, favors test us, and we find that we cannot trust ourselves even for a moment.

Beware of False Teachers

It has been well said that a banker is not required to know all the counterfeit money that has been made; rather, he should be thoroughly acquainted with all the distinctive features of the genuine; then he will instantly detect any counterfeit that passes through his hands.

In like manner, Christians should be so thoroughly acquainted with the pure Word of God that when any false doctrine is brought to them they will instinctively discern its insidious character and Whence it comes. Are not "his master's feet behind" (2 Kings 6:32) every lie as to the Word of God? As early as the third chapter of the Bible we read of Satan calling in question the express word of God.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which even the Word of God warns against these "antichrists." In I John 2 the babes among the Christians (that is, those newly saved) are warned of these false teachers. They are told that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are liars. (This was what the Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus said.) The babes are further warned against those who deny the Father and the Son. (This is the anti-Christian doctrine that started with Gnosticism and then broke like an avalanche over the professing church in the diabolical teaching of Arius.)

From the days of Arius until now, his wretched doctrine has had many followers and zealots. They are not now called Arians, but are known by such names as "Unitarians," "Christadelphians," "Jehovah's Witnesses," and others.

Unitarianism is anti-Christian, for it is a flat denial of the Trinity, and no one can accept it and not land in the lake of fire. It utterly rejects the Lord Jesus Christ - His deity, His spotless humanity, His atoning sacrifice, and consequently every need for repentance in, and salvation for, man.

Furthermore, it is sad to say that of recent years these heterodox teachers have found a home in many so-called churches that at one time were sound on these basic facts, by amalgamation of Unitarians and others.

But by far the most noticeable and most active Arians today are the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses." There is scarcely a town or hamlet where they are not at work deceiving men, women, and children. They seem to have the zeal of some Jews to whom the Lord said, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. 23:15.

This cult has been known as "Millennial Dawn," "Watchtower Bible and Tract Society," "International Bible Students Association," etc.

The difficulty for a young believer in meeting these agents is that they are not frank and open as was Arius in the fourth century, A.D. One of their self-styled "witnesses" told us flatly that they did not deny the deity of Christ and, when challenged, affirmed it all the more; but when pressed further, he turned and gave out a most vicious attack on the blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These people will go to great lengths to get their poisonous literature into the homes of the unsuspecting. O Christian, beware of these agents of the pit, and turn from their fair speeches and literature as from the most poisonous venom. There is positively no Savior for the lost in this modern

Arian cult, and consequently to allay fears and better to blind men, they deny eternal punishment. Yes, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," and they have.

We need also to remember that the 2nd epistle of John, written to a woman - a sister in Christ - instructed her not to receive into her house such as brought these false doctrines, nor to bid them God-speed - not even to say "goodbye" which is a contraction of "God be with ye." It is no time for being charitable when the glory of Christ is involved. We cannot be neutral in such a case, for neutrality would be treason against Christ.

At one time we called on an elderly man who was just a babe in the truth. After we had been speaking together of the Lord and His things, this man brought out a book which he said someone had given him. His comment was that it contained some good things. It was one of the early books of these Jehovah's Witnesses and was written by the self-styled "Pastor" Russell.

We told our friend that if we had brought him a box of candy he might have said there were some good things in that box, but that if we had hidden some deadly poison in some pieces of that candy it would cause his death. We then explained that this book he had been reading contained enough poison to damn the soul for all eternity. After saying this we opened the book at random and found one of the hidden pieces of poison; it was a flat denial of the deity of Christ, and made Him only a creature. This man was then told that if that statement were true we had no Savior, and advised to burn the book at once.

We who are saved should rejoice in Christ Jesus our Lord - He who, though He was God, humbled Himself and came all the way down to where we were, and then went to Calvary's cross and died there the Just for us, the unjust. He was fully God and perfect man. What a Savior we have! And nothing short of all this would have met us in our deep need. Job in his day, before the coming of the Son of God into this world in the form of man, said: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Job 9:33. Job felt the need of such a mediator, and who but one who is God could lay His hand upon God? Yet of necessity He must also be man in order to reach down to us. Well may we sing with the poet:

"How wondrous the glories that meet

In Jesus, and from His face shine!

His love is eternal and sweet,

'Tis human, 'tis also divine.

"His glory - not only God's Son -

In manhood He had His full part -

And the union of both joined in one

Form the fountain of love in His heart.

"The merits and worth of His blood
Have freed us from hell and from fear,
That we, as the blest sons of God,
May make His good pleasure our care.

"Oh then may this union and love
Make us walk in the service of Heaven,
'Mid obedience and suffering to prove
That we to the Lamb have been given."

The Bible: Its Unity

If a friend handed to us a ponderous volume consisting of sixty six books written by between thirty and forty persons, and at different times extending over fifteen hundred years, and said, Notwithstanding all their differences there is a remarkable unity throughout, should we not be astonished? As a matter of fact, there is no such book as the Bible in this respect; nor could there be, unless all the writings it contained had been under the guidance of one mind, and its communications throughout given by the one Spirit.

One thing which would be likely to strike some, persons in considering the principle of unity in a book, would be to compare the end with the beginning, and see if there were any connection as to similarity or contrast. In the Bible it is written, "Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world." Acts 15:18. Let us turn and examine a few scriptures as to this.

The first words we find in the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and as a matter of fact, much of the Bible is about God's heavenly and earthly people; also as to things in connection with the present heaven and earth; and in the end of the Book we read of "a new heaven and a new earth." (Rev. 21:1.)

In the beginning of the Book it is said, "Let there be light: and there was light"; afterward we are told that Christ is "the light of the world"; and in the end of the Book we read that "the Lamb is the light thereof."

In the beginning, we read of a tree of life in the garden of Eden, from which man was afterward excluded through his sin; in the end we find "the tree of life" with its many fruits, and are taught that the faithful will eat of "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2.)

A river too was in Eden, and at the end of Revelation we read of "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1.)

In Gen. 2 we see the first man (figure of Him that was to come) and his helpmeet, of whom he could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"; and in Rev. 21 we have presented to us "the bride, the Lamb's wife... Having the glory of God," of whom it had been said that He "nourisheth and cherisheth it," and that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Rev. 21:9, 11; Eph. 5:29, 30.)

In the earthly paradise man was in dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing; and the name he gave to every living creature, that was the name thereof; but toward the end of the Book the Lord Jesus, the last Adam, will bring this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and have His rightful place as "Lord of all," having subdued all things unto Himself (Gen. 1:28; 2:19; Psalm 8; Phil. 2:10, 11; 3:21).

In the beginning we have Satan tempting, then sin, and the curse; and in the end we see Satan in the lake of fire, sin taken away, righteousness dwelling, and no more curse. In the beginning,

sorrow and death; in the end, "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Gen. 3; Rev. 20:10; 2 Pet. 3:13; 1 John 3:5; Rev. 21:1-4.)

Surely then we find a remarkable unity of thought in the beginning and ending of the Bible, though the contrasts are most striking, because the Son of God had come meanwhile to accomplish redemption, destroy the works of the devil, take away sins, make good the promises, vindicate God in all His ways, honor Him in perfect obedience as man, and glorify Him in clearing us from all iniquity, and bring us to God to share the inheritance with Him who is heir of all things.

Another mark of unity is found in the truth it sets forth throughout. If early in the Old Testament it is said of man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," it is said in the New Testament that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 8:7.) If a prophet in olden time said, "All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:... the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever"; an apostle, seven hundred years after, writes the same, only adding to "the word of the Lord endureth forever," "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (Isa. 40:6,8; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25.) If the psalmist exclaimed, "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven," our Lord said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (Psalm 119:89; Matt. 24:35.) If the testimony of a prophet was, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts," an apostle informs us that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:11.) If Moses was inspired to write, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," we read in Hebrews that "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22.) If an Old Testament writer warned the people not to "add unto the word" which he commanded them, "neither shall ye diminish aught from it," the ancient writings are not closed without enforcing the exhortation by saying, "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"; nor can the canon of Scripture be concluded without the last of Revelation giving us the most solemn warning concerning it. (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22: 18, 19.)...

It is important to observe the unity of thought pervading all Scripture as to man's utter ruin and incurably bad condition, calling for nothing less than being born anew. If early in Scripture we are told that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," many hundreds of years after, another prophet declared that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; while hundreds of years later our Lord said, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," etc., and He did not name anything good in it. Later on an apostle declared that "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7); so that as to man's moral condition in God's sight, ever since the fall, the testimony throughout has been that "there is none righteous, no not one." The giving of the law, instead of helping or improving those who accepted the yoke, only caused the offense to abound, and gave "the knowledge of sin." Happy are they who so know the Lord Jesus Christ as their life and peace as to be not under the law and vainly hoping to reach God by doings and efforts, but as brought to God in Christ, and through His precious blood can bow in adoring praise and thanksgiving to Him for the accomplished work of eternal redemption.

The bright line which runs from Genesis to Revelation, and gives the whole Book a unity which nothing else could, is its testimony to the infinite glory of the Person of the Son, the eternal efficacy of His one sacrifice for sin, His moral worth and excellency beyond all thought, the glorious offices on our account He now sustains, as well as His glories yet to be revealed when He comes with clouds, and His saints accompany Him, to put down all that is contrary to God, and fulfill all the promises to Israel, and much more, which assure us of the verity of our Savior's words when speaking of the "Scriptures," "They are they which testify of Me." John 5:39.

The Book of Books

Into the midst of this world's activities, came Jesus. How did He treat this book, the Bible? As none other; it was the Book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing, first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the book that Jesus treats as the Word of God.

The Book That Explains All

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to bow to God and be saved; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can.

A Breakdown: King Asa

Faith has its mountings up, but it has often its breakings down. Human experiences teach us a little, but few can tell the whole tale. God's biographies teach us much, for He can tell us the whole.

Asa's history is one of those records written by the finger of God that cannot fail to instruct. (Read 2 Chron. 14; 15, and 16.) How brightly his reign begins; and ten years of peace and quiet are connected with an activity of faithful service which shows that Asa was walking before God. Altars were taken away, and Judah was taught to seek the Lord.

He rested not, however, in his security; he said not, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." God gave him rest, but he prepared himself for war; he built fenced cities, and he had an army of mighty men.

Now comes the test of faith. Zerah appears on the scene, and Asa goes out to Mareshah to meet him; but he leans (relies or "rests," v. 11) on God. There are few more beautiful prayers in trouble than the firm, confident cry of Asa, "LORD, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee."

God answered the prayer, and smote the Ethiopians before Asa; and the people "carried away very much spoil." Chapter 15 tells the result of this glorious victory, but even in victory God sends a note of warning by Obed, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him."

Twenty-six years pass over Asa, and now chapter 16 opens with another scene. Baasha comes against Asa, and he who met Zerah in the name of the Lord goes to meet Baasha in the name of Benhadad, king of Syria, and he robs God's house and his own house to bribe the world's power to help him against his enemy. What a breakdown we have here! He who was strong as a lion against the Ethiopian with his thousand thousand men and three hundred chariots, quails before the ungodly king of Israel.

Why this change? God was the same; circumstances were less critical; but Asa had changed. He had taken another staff to lean on, and therefore God had left him to his own devices; and, after the shame and dishonor had been reaped, He sends Hanani the seer who says, "Because thou hast relied [or leaned, the same word as in chapter 16:111 on the king of Syria, and hast not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand," and winds up with the following precious word of promise, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Alas, that thirty-six years should so end! But these things are written for our admonition, and are profitable for teaching, for conviction, for setting straight what has gone crooked, and for discipline in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

The backsliding soul is slow to hear the voice that reproves, and Hanani is put in prison. Has Asa fallen so low, and his conscience become so seared? Yes, it is so!

For three years God's forbearance waits, and then again His hand is on the wayward child, and he is smitten with disease in his feet. But, unhumbled still, he seeks not to the Lord in his extremity, but to the physicians. After two years of suffering he dies, and his sun sets amid clouds of gloom.

Man may bury with all honors, and may make a great burning of sweet odors and spices, but Asa's old age was not borne witness to by God; and we may conclude, as we are not told to the contrary, that he died leaving God's servant, His faithful seer, in prison. Deeply sad is all this. He who ran so well and so long, broke down at the end, and passed away as one saved by fire.

We are only safe as we enter into Paul's experience and say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." As if to give emphasis to these words, the Apostle adds, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:12-14.

Herein lies our only safeguard against those most terrible breakdowns which we see in Solomon, in Asa, in Demas, and in others who once ran well, but were hindered by the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

A Brief Word on the Epistles of Peter: Difference Between the Two Epistles

I was thinking lately of the difference in character between the two epistles of Peter. I think you will see them to be thus:

In the first he strengthens the saints against all kinds of suffering. In the second he warns them of all kinds of deceit. He contemplates the enemy, as it were, as the lion in the first, and as the serpent in the second. It may be that we suffer for righteousness' sake, or it may be in conflict with the evil that works in our own members, or from the assaults of him who goes about as a roaring lion. It may be suffering then of very different kinds, but still what he looks at throughout.

The first epistle is the suffering of the saints - faith cast into the trial as gold is cast into a furnace, that it may be found unto "praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And the temper of mind which he especially commends to the saints in connection with this suffering state, I think you will find to be subjection; he is constantly enforcing that in them. Whatever relationship he addresses, it is still the duty of subjection that he seems to have in mind; and there is a moral connection between these things, for if we own this to be the suffering age, we shall likewise see clearly that it is the age for exercising the spirit of subjection, or self-renunciation. I cannot honestly confess that the Church is now to count on trial and sorrow, if I am seeking to please myself or to do my own will.

But in the second epistle it is deceit that he contemplates. He fortifies the saints against the false teachers and the scoffers, the error of the wicked; and the temper of mind which he seeks to cultivate in them, as security against all that, is the diligence of growing in grace and in knowledge, for in that indeed lies their security. If we are not exercising ourselves in the good, the evil will get ahead and find its advantage over us; and thus the moral connection here is as perfect and intelligible as in the first epistle. Growth in grace and knowledge is the security of the saint against the deceit of the serpent - subjection of mind and self-renunciation, our strength in meeting the roaring of the lion.

Burning With Pure Oil

In a devoted Christian family who were walking in the fear of God the daily reading was one morning in Exod. 27 The 20th verse was dwelt upon. The parents talked together about the oil that was used in the vessels of the tabernacle, and looked up passages in the New Testament that explained its meaning and how it could be applied. When the reading was over and the older children had left the room, the youngest child, a boy of five years, was detained, as was the usual custom, to be taught some simple verses by his mother, and to pray with her. The parents had not supposed that this child would understand what they had been talking about that morning, or that he would feel the slightest interest in a subject which they thought far beyond his age. However, when he had learned his verse, he kneeled down to pray, and in the midst of his prayer he paused; then he exclaimed earnestly, O my God, make me to burn this day with pure oil."

The morning lesson had not been lost upon him. And his earnest petition to God was not lost; for throughout the day of his life he was a devoted Christian. Thus was the earnest cry of that little child heard and answered. God's Word had found its entrance into his soul, and it did its blessed work.

What an incentive this case should be to young Christian parents to maintain the "family altar" in this day of lukewarmness, when too many feel that they cannot spare the time for this. God's rich blessing is upon it; and sorrow will be to those who neglect it.

And are there few, or many, young Christians who are seeking daily to "burn with pure oil"? Such as are, will be lights in the darkness, and will be "polished shafts" in the quiver of the Lord.

The Christian's Relations With the World: Worldly Marriages

The Christian is in the world but not of it. He is surrounded with those who know not God, and it is a most important thing for him to know how to conduct himself in relation with worldly people, both publicly and privately, in social life, business life, and religious life. Before, however, speaking briefly on this, we will just take up very shortly a few examples of relationship with the world, and its effects as seen in Scripture.

WORLDLY MARRIAGES

In 1 Kings 11:1-8 we find the sad result in Solomon's case of marrying strange wives, idolatrous women. No doubt, as many a child of God since, he trusted in his wise heart, in the splendid temple he had built, in his own long religious life, to lead him aright, but instead of that they led him astray. And so it is in nine cases out of ten. A Christian marries a worldly girl, an idolater; that is, one who has her heart set on earthly things called idols (1 John 5). He hopes, no doubt, to set her straight, but having committed a sin by marrying her, he is soon led by her into another; for not only has he all her influence to lead him wrong, but that of his own deceitful heart as well. It is, indeed, lamentable to think how many ships, starting on their heavenward voyage, have been shipwrecked on the quicksands of this life, through sailing in company with an enemy's vessel. For, hard as it is to believe, the young and attractive are equally Satan's slaves with the grayheaded sinner. Beware of worldly marriages, which are condemned and forbidden by God (2 Cor. 6); perhaps few sins so surely meet with heavy chastisement, too often lifelong. Most earnestly then would we warn young believers of this most fatal of all worldly alliances. Other false steps can be retraced at will this never. It may be these lines are read by someone whose affections are already engaged by some worldly person. We would warn you against such a marriage at your peril. Better far to have a broken heart for God's glory, and one that He can heal, than to have a heart broken later on, as you surely will, through seeing with your eyes open, and discovering when too late, the fearful error you have committed.

WORLD-BORDERING

In Jehoshaphat we find another case of worldly alliance; this was in joining to fight a common enemy (2 Chron. 18)-no great sin apparently. The king of Syria was a foe to both of them, and the victory of one would help the other. Nevertheless, what saith the Lord? "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD." Has this no voice to those Christians who, like Jehoshaphat, would join the world to fight some common enemy? There are common enemies; drink, vice, poverty, disease, are such to a great extent. It will then be seen at once that this one example strikes a fatal blow at all alliances of a social nature between believer and unbeliever. In this it is evident the Christian is not to join in improving or bettering the world. He must walk in his way and the world in theirs. Indeed, if the Christian is true, they cannot work together, for the ultimate end of the one is the advancement of the world and the good of mankind, that of the latter the glory of Christ. In a place, therefore, where He is despised and still rejected by the world at large, it is evident that there cannot be much

harmony in common pursuits.

In Jehoram we get another instance of the evils of a worldly match (2 Chron. 21:6). Many are the instances of the unbeliever leading the Christian astray. In this case the evil is worse still, for not only is the husband led wrong, but the child also is led astray (22:3) by the evil counsels of his mother. This too will often be found to be the case, especially when the mother is the unbeliever; and thus the result of one false step may descend to generations.

Again, in Ezra 9, do we get fatal instances of these unholy alliances. But surely we have had enough to show us what are almost invariably the results of thus dishonoring God.

WORSHIPERS MUST BE CHRISTIANS

In Eze. 44:7, we come to another class of worldly fellowship, and that is in religion. One of the crying sins of Israel of old was that they brought in unbelievers to the temple worship, and the prophet is bid to "mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary"; and further, "No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel." Our sanctuary, we know, can only be entered by believers (Heb. 10) in reality; but surely this plainly shows that in outward worship we cannot place believers and unbelievers together before God. It is not for us, of course, to try the hearts, and a hypocrite may creep in anywhere; but surely divine worship ought to be confined to the children of God. Indeed, none else can worship, and it is an awful mockery to see those who have no pretensions to be saved (not even the lip profession), joining with God's people in singing His praises. This is strangely like this very sin of Israel of old. We do not now speak of preaching the gospel. At all such services unbelievers have their right place; but these are surely perfectly distinct from the worship of believers, spiritually within the veil. In religion, therefore, we cannot place believers and unbelievers on a common footing.

Neither can we seek the help or aid of the world (pecuniary or otherwise) in the Lord's work.

Nehemiah avoided the danger of worldly help in Neh. 6, and one reason why he was so blessed was because he was so separate to God. The people of Israel too at this time entered into a curse and an oath not to marry unbelievers (10:29). Would that everyone "having understanding" (v. 28) followed (without legality) the same course! Separation from worldly company is the result of having the Word as the enjoyed portion of the heart (Jer. 15:16, 17). The joy of the world and delight in the Word cannot go together. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced." We have now seen enough to show us, without quoting the many precepts in the Word on the subject, that worldly marriages are in every way to be condemned and avoided, that all philanthropic and social worldly alliances are expressly condemned, however good their object (of course it is understood that only real alliances are here spoken of; that is, believers and unbelievers publicly banded together). We have also seen that no religious mixture is to be tolerated either in worship or service (such as giving money, etc., etc.); God's people must be separate. The path is a narrow one still, and not less so because we live in Christendom. Indeed, now one needs to be closely walking with God to learn how to keep one's feet separate from all such evil alliances, and have one's heart wide enough for all right sympathies and feelings. May the Lord enable each of us who desires to be

true to Him to discern the path of wisdom through this world so as to be kept from all unequal yokes, learning at the same time to bear His yoke. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29).

Christ's Unselfishness: the World's Selfishness

One thing impressed my mind most peculiarly when the Lord was first opening my eyes-I never found Christ doing a single thing for Himself. Here is an immense principle. There was not one act in all Christ's life done to serve or please Himself. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, unfailing love flowed from Him, no matter what the contradiction of sinners-one amazing and unwavering testimony of love, and sympathy, and help. But it was ever others, and not Himself, that were comforted, and nothing could weary it, nothing could turn it aside. Now the world's whole principle is self, doing well for itself (Psalm 49:18).

Men know that it is upon the energy of selfishness they have to depend. Everyone that knows anything of the world knows this. Without it the world could not go on. What is the world's honor? Self. What its wealth? Self. What is advancement in the world? Self. They are but so many forms of the same thing. The principle that animates the individual man in each is the spirit of self-seeking. The business of the world is the seeking of self, and the pleasures of the world are selfish pleasures. They are troublesome pleasures too, for we cannot escape from a world where God has said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground," etc. Toil for self is irksome; but suppose a man finds out at length that the busy seeking of self is trouble and weariness, and having procured the means of living without it, gives it up-what then? He just adopts another form of the same spirit of self and turns to selfish ease.

I am not now speaking of vice and gross sin (of course everyone will allow that to be opposite to the spirit of Christ), but of the whole course of the world. Take the world's decent, moral man, and is he an "epistle of Christ"? Is there in him a single motive like Christ's? He may do the same things; he may be a carpenter as Christ was said to be (Mark 6:3), but he has not one thought in common with Christ.

As to the outside, the world goes on with its religion and its philanthropy. It does good, builds its hospitals, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and the like; but its inward springs of action are not Christ's. Every motive that governed Christ all the way along is not that which governs men; and the motives which keep the world going are not those which were found in Christ at all.

The infidel owns Christ's moral beauty, and selfishness can take pleasure in unselfishness; but the Christian is to "put on Christ. He went about doing good all the day long; there was not a moment but He was ready as the servant in grace of the need of others. And do not let us suppose that this cost Him nothing. He had not where to lay His head; He hungered and was wearied; and, when He sat down, where was it? Under the scorching sun at the well's mouth, while his disciples went into the city to buy bread. And what then? He was as ready for the poor, vile sinner who came to Him as if He were not hungry, neither faint and weary. He was never at ease. He was in all the trials and troubles that man is in as the consequences of sin, and see how He walked! He made bread for others, but He would not touch a stone to make it into bread for Himself. As to the moral motives of the soul, the man of the world has no one principle in common with Christ. If then the worldling is to read in the Christian the character of Christ, it is evident the world cannot read it in

him; he is not a Christian; he is not in the road to heaven at all, and every step he takes only conducts him farther and farther from the object in view. When a man is in a wrong road, the farther he goes in it the more he is astray.

The Color of Our Hope: Our Walk

It has been said that men are known by the ends they are pursuing. If this be so, our conduct in the present life will have the impress and bearing of that futurity we are expecting. Our life here will be colored by the foretaste of a life there. Those whose ambition is dignity and power, those who dream only of riches, those who have no other aim than the pleasures of this world, act according to that which is in their hearts; their habits bear the mark of what they long for. So is it with us; if the faithful understood their calling, which is no less than participation in a coming heavenly glory, what would be the consequence? Nothing less than viewing themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They would judge the spirit of the age, and would preserve their hearts from being engrossed by human objects, and from many a care and distraction hurtful to the life of a Christian. They would exercise a happy dependence upon Him who has ordered all things, and who knows the end from the beginning, and would yield themselves entirely to that hope which has been given them, and to the discharge of those duties which flow from it. Our passions instead of being unduly perturbed and anxious, let loose in a world of politics, would be quieted as we observe what God has said. We should be tranquil. Living practically separated from the world, we can study beforehand the profound and perfect wisdom of God.

Confess With Thy Mouth

The throat, the tongue, the lips, and the mouth are enumerated in Rom. 3, in that black picture of man's sin and guilt, for they have been instruments of evil that comes from within - from a wicked heart.

"Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

Yes, their throat is an open sepulcher; that is, it is the outlet for a place where moral death reigns. Their tongues have been used to deceive - maybe in deliberate lying, or perhaps just using partial truths to deceive. The poison of asps is under their lips to infect those who hear their speech; and their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Such is man in his condition of distance, from and enmity toward God a black picture indeed.

In the 10th chapter of the same epistle, we find that when the gospel is received in faith those same lips are used in another way:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus [or, Jesus as Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. 10:9, 10.

After one receives in the heart the truth that the Lord Jesus died for him, and rose again, then the mouth is opened in confession of that blessed Person as Lord. Yes, the same mouth that beforehand had been used to deceive, to curse, to poison, is now opened to confess as its own Lord the One who was formerly despised. Blessed change!

This is interestingly illustrated in the one thief who got saved while hanging on a cross beside the Lord Jesus. At first he joined his fellow thief in reviling the Lord of Glory; but when the light dawned in his soul, he spoke out against such conduct, and mentioned the fear of God. He rebuked the other thief, witnessed to the Lord's innocence, and then turned to Jesus and addressed Him as Lord. What a change! and in such a short time. His lips, his tongue, and his mouth,

which had been so recently used in the service of Satan, were now used to confess Jesus as Lord. It was so with Saul of Tarsus, the mad persecutor of all who honored the name of Jesus, for when he was brought face to face with the fact that it was the Lord Jesus he was persecuting, he used his lips to own Jesus as Lord. This same feature continued to mark the Apostle Paul, for when he neared the end of his journey he spoke affectionately of "Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). Time had neither erased nor dimmed that which his tongue uttered on the Damascus road years before.

In Heb. 13 we read, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." v. 15.

What a wonderful thing it is that these lips of ours - once used for that which was evil - can now bring forth fruit to God! And how can they produce fruit? in "giving thanks to His name"! First, the heart must feel that thankfulness, and then the lips utter it to God; and He calls it "fruit." Blessed fruit! but all the result of what His own grace has wrought for us, and in us.

There are many verses that speak of how the mouth may be used, but here is another we wish to notice: "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 15:6. The mouth which was once used in disrespect of God can now be used to glorify Him, and that together with the saints of God.

Then in Eph. 4, where we get exhortations to walk according to the place wherein we now stand, we find these words:

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." v. 29.

Not only are our lips to confess Jesus as our Lord, to bring forth fruit for God, and to glorify Him, but by His grace they can be used for that which is good so as to edify other Christians. Who but God could take such lips and make them instruments of blessing?

But there is also a sad and solemn reflection for us who are saved, in that these lips may even yet bring forth that which is not good, or for edification; so we are exhorted to let no corrupt communication come out of our mouths. How easily one may slip into that evil! The heart is still incurably wicked and we possess an evil nature that may show itself; nowhere is it more apt to be seen than in what comes out of our mouths. Perhaps something defiling has been heard by us, and we have not had the cover on the vessel (Numb. 19:15), and it found an entrance into our minds; it was defiling, and the tendency is to repeat it to another. Sad, sad, it is when we do this, for our mouth is then an instrument for defiling others, and not for edifying them.

The epistle of James speaks a great deal about the tongue and what it does; this epistle does not go deeper, to the source in the heart, but lets us know the terrible things that come out of the mouth. It says (read Jas. 3) it "is a little member, and boasteth great things." Yes, the tongue is only a little member but it can do untold damage. How it can boast! And boastfulness is hateful to God; it is pride. The tongue is one thing that no man has tamed, although he has tamed creatures of the land, sea, and air; it is an unruly evil. But the inspired penman goes on to say that out of the same mouth ought not to come forth good things and bad ones; a fountain does not send forth sweet water and bitter, or salt water and fresh. These words should exercise us greatly about what comes out of our mouths.

In Col. 3 we are told to put away "filthy communication" out of our mouths, and not to lie one to another (vv. 8, 9). How easily we retell something and do not tell it exactly as it was told to us. We are very apt to color things, to put a different light on them, and is not this in its essence lying? How careful we ought to be to tell things correctly, and to judge every infraction of exact truthfulness.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians he said that he feared that when he came to them he would find "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." 2 Cor. 12:20. How sad that such a condition could exist among the saints of God! What

debates or contentions have been in the Church on earth! What confusion and evil work have been wrought by envying! And what shall we say of wraths and strifes, or animosities and dissensions? Do they not come from within, from an evil heart, from that which is left unjudged by ourselves? But the backbitings, or as another translation puts it, "detractions," have brought sorrow to many hearts. How easily we go behind others' backs, and say things to detract from our brethren. Is not this a prevalent evil? Is it not still at work among the children of God? And oh, those whisperings, or gossiping! Who can estimate the trouble and grief in the assemblies of God's people brought on by whispering? Whispering, or gossiping, is never about good; it is always something shady. But some saints hide behind the fact that what they whisper is the truth; is it "lovely,... of good report," or is it praiseworthy? How much evil speaking and whispering would be avoided if we refused to say something behind our brother's back that we would not say to his face. And shall one point a finger at another? Is there one who is not in some measure guilty of this? But let us be on our guard, for the Word of God warns of these evils and their sad results.

Very much of the gossiping would be avoided if we showed the spirit of love; love will never harm the object of its affection. If love were more active we would be more in the spirit of prayer, seeking the good and blessing of our brother instead of speaking about him to others. Did the Lord speak to others about Peter's faults, or even his failure? but rather he said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." How much more are we ready to speak to others of the faults of our brother than to bear him up before the throne of grace.

From these whisperings come roots of bitterness, and soon many are defiled. May the Lord exercise us all to be on our guard against the inroads of this pernicious evil, but rather show love that "covers a multitude of sins." May God see love in exercise on behalf of our brethren.

There are some wholesome words of wisdom in the book of Proverbs on this subject, which we will quote:

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." And is not this true? Where there is much talk there is sin in it. "But he that refraineth his lips is wise." Pro. 10:19.

"A whisperer separateth chief friends." Pro. 16:28. An evil work indeed! But how many friends have been separated by the work of some whisperer - someone who may have told the truth, but colored it, or put a wrong light on it, and the injured one had no redress for he was unaware of what was done.

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." Pro. 21:23. Wholesome words! needed words!

And let us remember that when someone starts some slander, or evil report, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Pro. 26:20. Have we not had it in our power to let some evil report end with us, rather than to repeat it, and continue to spread it? Have we always been careful to not add wood to the fire?

One brother made it a habit to ask anyone who brought him a piece of gossip, "Can I tell it to the party you are speaking about? If not, don't tell me."

And does not a bad report travel faster than a good one? Yes, even a lie will run faster than the truth. Years ago, one said, "A lie will go round the world before the truth can get its boots on." And

then when an evil report is started and later found to have been incorrect, or untrue, do the same ones that spread it make an equal effort to circulate the truth, and correct the wrong? In many instances, No.

In closing there are two verses in the Psalm that we might well use as a prayer each day. Not that we approve of forms of prayer, but these verses express most suitably what should be the real desire of our hearts:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14. How careful we should be that the words of our mouths may be acceptable in His sight. Our brother may not hear what is said about him, but there is One who hears and knows all, and we should seek that all that is in the heart, and what comes out of the mouth, may meet with His approval.

And the last verse we will quote is, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Psalm 141:3. If this were the desire of our hearts and the language of our lips, when we meet with other Christians, how different would be our subject of conversation. May the Lord grant us grace to desire this keeping of our mouth and lips. And may the tongue, lips, and mouth, formerly used in our sin and folly, be used to glorify God and minister grace to others.

Consider the Lilies

The monkishness that would condemn everything is not the denial of sin but the denial of nature. God never denies it because He made it. In His own blessed grace, in all the ruin sin has wrought, the Lord can take notice of His own works: "Consider the lilies." Matt. 6:28. He saw all that was of God, while so practically with God, and entirely above the evil, that He saw all that was of man and judged it.

In spirit up there I can look down and see what is of God's hand in the creation itself. When I get out of it I can look at it; Christ being out of it completely could look at a lily and call attention to its beauty, judging all that was morally corrupt. Where anything had the stamp of God He could admire it; and it is only by judging evil that one can do this.

I look for a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no evil; but because of being brought into a place in Christ superior to the evil; I can look at all that is of God in this world.

If natural affections get too strong and hold the objects of them, they become idols; but to be without them is one of the signs of the last days.

My safety is to get so completely with God as to be able to let my affections flow out more and more to Christians. God has set His seal to all He created; and evil came in. God, having judged it by the cross, lifts us above it.

"CONSIDER THE LILIES"

'Midst all the ruin sin had brought,

Our blessed Lord in grace

Looked round upon the work God wrought,

And gave it all its place.

He showed us by that beauteous flower,

The lily, clothed so fair,

That man with all his boasted power

Could naught with it compare.

He fully saw what was of God,

Because He dwelt with Him;

And well He knew, our blessed Lord!

Man's heart so full of sin.

God on His work His seal had set,
But evil entered in;
He judged it by the cross; Christ met
The judgment due to sin.
Lifted above this evil scene,
Our place in Christ up there,
We trace where God's own hand has been,
And give Him glory here.
Whatever bears the stamp of God
In this poor world, we prize;
We recognize creation's Lord,
And naught of His despise.
His skill is seen expressed in power,
His heart displayed to save;
We learn, not in the fruit or flower,
But in the One He gave.
With hearts entwined around the Son,
We need no idol fear;
Affections flowing o'er will run
To those who love Him here.

Consistency

Of one thing be assured, no truth avails unless you are prepared to carry it out in every day's practice. The world will let you hold and even say anything provided they see that you have no serious thought of being faithful, and so calling them to be the same. He then has not the smallest resemblance to the Lord's messenger, who says one thing and does another, who denounces the world, yet seeks it for his family, judges rightly, yet never thinks of acting out his convictions. Is this living so as to give effect to a divine testimony? He who is the living spring of the truth is also the Holy Spirit. What can be more calculated to destroy the truth than practical inconsistency with it?

The Cross

If we come to the cross, we must come by our wants and sins; no one comes truly, unless he comes as a sinner whose sins brought him there. But when we pass through the rent veil into the presence of God in perfect peace through the efficacy of the work He accomplished, and look back at the cross by which we came, in contemplating it in a divine way, we find that the cross then has in it a glory and excellency all its own, of which everything in God's ways is the result - even the new heavens and the new earth. God was perfectly glorified in it. It was the climax of good and evil - all was met there. We must come to the cross as sinners to find the good of it; but if we have found peace by it, coming into God's presence reconciled, it is everything we shall see forever. We never shall forget the Lamb that was slain. But still we can contemplate it in a divine way.

Different Types of Conversions: Lord Jesus Meets the Need of Each

I have been looking at the different characteristics which mark the divine operation on the soul in the different conversions recorded in the gospels and the Acts. Such, for instance, as that of Peter and of Levi in Luke 5; that of Zaccheus in Luke 19; that of Nicodemus and of the Samaritan in John.

It is sweet to inspect the way in which the light of God approached and entered the soul. Sometimes it was gentle; sometimes it was full of force and rapidity, sometimes it intimated a work more fully on the heart; and sometimes a work more on the conscience. But it was always God's work, that we know, though the material operated on may have been various, and the modes of operation various.

Look at Acts 8; 9, and 10. The eunuch was evidently in the hand of God ere Philip met him - he was under the drawings of the Father (John 6). And that his heart was deeply engaged is evident because he forgot the common order, as I may say, of the world, when he bid Philip come up to him in his chariot. He waited for no introduction. The stranger was no stranger, since he referred to that subject which at that moment was everything to his heart. He was another Zaccheus, who forgot his place in society and pressed through the crowd after Jesus.

Look at Saul. He was full of religious zeal - the zeal of an inquisitor. Look at Cornelius. He was full of religious devotion - gentle, benevolent, disposed (instead of persecuting others) to judge that all others were better than himself.

Here were different materials, and the modes of operation on them were different. The work was carried on in Saul's soul with characteristic force - that in Cornelius's with like gentleness and grace. But both of them equally needed Jesus. There was no life in either or for either but through Jesus.

So the jailor and Lydia in chapter 16. Lydia was something of a female Cornelius. She was devout, and gentle, and gracious, and the Lord, by a very gentle operation, opened her heart. The jailor was a kind of Saul, at least in his apprenticeship; he was beginning to practice his hand in that work of persecution with which Saul had been long familiar. But as far as he had gone, he had learned his art well; and the operation on him, like that on Saul of Tarsus, was in characteristic force. An earthquake accompanied the unlocking of the bars of his strong and iron heart, as "the still small voice" had done the business with Lydia's.

But again; neither the gentle Lydia, nor the fiery jailor, could do without Jesus. Till Lydia knew Jesus, Paul could teach her; but he did not worship with her, though she was a devout woman vv. 13, 15.

May the souls of sinners be precious in our sight! and these witnesses of the grace of God, and of the power of the Spirit, be acceptable to our hearts.

Different Viewpoints: How Do You Look at It?

An artist, a fisherman, and an oarsman were once gazing on the swift waters of a river. It was a lovely evening, and the sun ere he sank to rest was lighting up the whole scene with the richest hues, and the brown waters shone and sparkled as they tumbled along down the little rapid at our feet, while further across the river, in the shallower part, the water was apparently as still as a lake, reflecting back all the coloring of the evening sky.

"What a picture this would make," said the artist, "with that old castle in the distance, and these birches and rapid waters in the foreground!"

"Well, I was just thinking," said the fisherman, "that there must be some fine large trout lying yonder in that still pool under that old tree on the farther bank. I should think this was a fine river for salmon. What do you say?" he continued, addressing the boating man.

"Well," he said, "I am not much in the fishing line. I was just wondering which would be the best part to run down this rapid. I should think there was hardly enough water for a heavy boat unless it is just where you see the current runs strong without breaking into foam."

How strange it is, I thought, to hear three such various opinions about the same river! It certainly makes all the difference from what point of view you look at it. To one it is a subject for his canvas, to another a place for his rod, while a third would launch his boat upon it.

Certainly there is a very great deal in the point of view from which we regard things. Indeed, everything depends on this. An artist scans a landscape for a picture, a shepherd for his sheep, a farmer for the chances of the weather, a traveler for his road.

In nothing is the point of view more important than in the way in which we look at this world. People naturally regard it in various ways; one sees in it a scene for pleasure, another a field for ambition, while a third looks on it as a sphere for mere self-indulgence. How do you regard it, beloved reader? Scripture is quite clear as to how we are to view the world. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world," says the Lord, "even so have I also sent them into the world." We know how Christ regarded it. We know it was not to Him a place of pleasure, but rather a scene of sorrow and suffering to which He had come to do His Father's will and gather out His own. Our object then is the same, and it is very helpful clearly to grasp this from the very onset of our Christian career—that we are left in the world to do our blessed Master's will, and to please Him. It is a wonderful thing when we really grasp the purpose for which we are left down here.

A Christian then surveys this world as a foreign scene in which he has a very definite work to do for his Lord, but to which he no longer belongs. He scans it to look for those he can help and befriend, for broken hearts to heal, for burdened souls to relieve, for straying feet to restore, for fainting sheep to sustain, for lambs to feed, for pilgrims to cheer on their journey.

What a blessing in this world is the Christian who surveys it from this true standpoint, the only right point of view for one who belongs to Christ!

May God grant that both you and I, beloved reader, may look at this scene from God's point of view, and thus learn to fill our true place in it to His glory.

The Discouragements of Last Days: the Times of Jeremiah

The ministration of the prophets in the varied exigencies of Israel unfolds the grace and forbearance of the living God. The period at which God raised them up, and the consequent character of their service, make the history of each very interesting; but of all the times during which the prophets prophesied, none are more painfully so than those of Jeremiah. It is not in the amount of good done that Jeremiah stands before us as pre-eminent; on the contrary, results of labor are nowhere found so small, perhaps, as from the labors of that prophet.

The ministry of Moses was one that told wonderfully on the condition of God's people. He found them under the galling yoke of Pharaoh; he left them within sight of the promised land. Joshua left them in possession. The history of the varied deliverers before the days of Samuel, gives us an account of victories obtained. Each one left some footmarks in the track to say that he had passed that way. So, afterward, with the prophets. Elijah's and Elisha's days were marked times of God's goodness to an unfaithful people; but if we ask what were the results of Jeremiah's prophecies, we see nothing but desolation and ruin, and, by-and-by, lose him himself in the great confusion. At the same time we see incessant service, unwearied faithfulness, so long as there remained a part of the wreck to be faithful to.

Others who had gone before had foretold where the disobedient and rebellious ways of Israel would lead them, but it was the lot of Jeremiah to be on the ship when it went to pieces. He warned and warned again of the rocks that were ahead, but Israel heeded not. Up to the last moment he was used of God to press home on their consciences their sad condition, but without avail; and even after the captivity he remained to guide the wayward remnant of those left in the land, but only to experience the same obstinacy and determination to be ruined on their part.

The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. Now this was a period of blessing - of revival. It was in the eighteenth year that the Passover was kept, of which it was said, "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet." Jeremiah would have his share in that joy. I have often thought how much depends on the start of a Christian. To have the lot in early life cast among the fresh provisions of God's house, and amid the energies of His own Spirit, will give advantages to such a soul which are not the common lot of the Church of God. Such were Jeremiah's first days - the days of Josiah - he was cradled in blessing, such too as had not been tasted in Israel since the days of Samuel. He lamented the death of Josiah. These joys so fresh were of short duration. But there is an intimate connection between the joys of communion and faithful warfare. There will be little of the one without the other.

Jeremiah had drunk of the sweet drafts of blessing which had been so richly provided, and he was therefore able to feel the bitterness of that cup which Israel had to drink. The last chapter of 2 Chronicles shows how prominent he was as a prophet. His words were despised, and the result was the casting off for a season of God's people. One of the services of Jeremiah during this period was to break the fall (if I may so express my thoughts) of Israel. Careful reading will show

how tenderly the prophet applied himself to the then existing wants of the people; and it is wonderful to see the compassion of God as exhibited by him. Jonah regretted that God's judgment did not fall on Nineveh; but the solitudes of Jeremiah were those of the tender parent who would fain prevent the calamity befalling a disobedient child, but failing there, carries still the parent's heart, the parent's tears, to soften the rebellious woes of that child.

How often do we, in our intercourse with our brethren, act otherwise. If I see willfulness and disobedience, I warn; I tell the consequences it may be; I press home with diligence those warnings; all are unheeded, the calamity comes, bad, or worse than I foretold: how ready is the heart then to triumph in its own faithfulness, and the poor victim of his own rashness is left to himself, while in a kind of triumph I tell him, "It is all deserved." The heart of Jeremiah could say, "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive." Such hearts are needed now.

It is in the book of this prophet that we have the history of that part of Israel which was not removed out of the land. Jeremiah's service did not close even when the city was taken, and the wall broken down. The heart that - like this prophet's - is true to God and His people, will always have something to do. The special place he held was to seek to draw the people into repentance; to warn; he was unheeded, and the judgments of God reached home.

No sooner had the captives been borne away than quite another field of duty rose before him; and one would have supposed that what had just happened would have made him a welcome guest in the houses of the poor deserted Israelites. In chapter 42 we see this new labor that Jeremiah found. The destroying flood had swept away all he had formerly been among - the kings, the priests, the princes, the temple, the vessels. The glory of Israel had departed. How often have we seen that when services have been apparently disowned the servant retires. When we have been laboring for an object and suddenly find all dashed from our hands like a goodly vessel, and our labor seems to have been in vain, then the heart faints and grows weary. Never was a more complete failure than that that was before the eye of the prophet. His heart alone remained whole amidst it all; he was ready for fresh service. The remnant muster to him; their confession seems honest, their hearts seem true. "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) that the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." Chapter 42:2, 3.

Jeremiah had had experience of the human heart; ready to act as aforetime, he says, "Whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you." After ten days the answer was given to the same company (v. 9, to the end of the chapter). The leaning of the hearts of the people was toward Egypt. There is something in Egypt, with all its bondage, that the heart naturally clings to. The remnant, wearied with the struggles through which they had passed, sought for rest to the flesh. "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt" every now and then oozes from the hearts of Israel. There is something in Egypt to attract all our hearts, something that flesh values; and no wonder, when we can say, "No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread." Jer. 42:14. The Lord keep us from this repose of death! The disappointed heart is in danger of turning

back here.

When the people came to Jeremiah, their words were, "That the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." God had provision for this time of need. There never was a time when the Lord would not bless those who trust in Him; there never was a place, however desolate or forlorn, where God could not meet His afflicted ones. His word was, "If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent Me of the evil that I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon," etc. "And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to re turn to your own land."

The prophet's words are despised; and notwithstanding the threats if they returned to Egypt, they are soon gone, once more to contend against the judgments of God. Once more Jeremiah finds himself despised. He was unable to keep them by promises of blessing, or to deter them from going into Egypt by threats of judgment; the power of unbelief had set in so strongly, that spite of the warnings, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, swept the land, and Jeremiah along with the rest, into the land of Egypt. But even here we find him with a word from God The people, once back in Egypt, were soon burning incense unto other gods. When once we get into a current, it will carry us far beyond our intentions. This remnant hoped to reach Egypt that they might see no more war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or suffer hunger; but they went into all the idolatry of that people. How often have we seen the same thing in principle. In all the periods of Israel we shall not find a more hardened state than that into which the remnant sunk; see chapter 44:15-19. Here we appear to lose the prophet; and

might he not say, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught"?

I think we may lose blessing if we do not follow on in the track of God's grace to His people; and if we do, we must keep side by side with Jeremiah. Others had their service away in Babylon. God remembered His own there; but in following with this prophet, we learn the inexhaustible grace there is in God, where there is a heart to trust in Him, while we see at the same time the evils of the human heart becoming greater and greater as that goodness is put forth.

What varied scenes did this man of God pass through, from the time when with joy he partook of the Passover in the days of Josiah, till he saw the utter desolation which he so pathetically describes in his Lamentations - O for hearts like his! "Mine eyes do fail with tears,... for the destruction of the daughter of my people."

As we have before observed, those who beforetime had served their generation by the will of God saw around them the fruits of their labors. In none of them, however, do we see the same measure of tenderness of heart.

God had reserved Jeremiah for his day, and had given him the heart for his work a heart sorely tried, but one that could weep for Israel's woes. This prophet was the expression of God's heart toward Israel too. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" was Jehovah's language; and His prophet was there as the proof of God's grace.

In looking back on the history of the Church of God we see a constant raising up of one after another to step in to meet the Church's wants. The Spirit of God acts according to His knowledge

of present needs. Sometimes instruments (not marked either for correctness of knowledge, or even purity of walk - I mean when judged by the Word as to their associations) have been much used of God. In the latter days of Christendom, I doubt not, but that however lavish the hand of God may be in giving hearts like those of Jeremiah to meet the wants of His saints, the apostasy will be so dark that labor therein, even of the most devoted character, will scarce leave a trace of itself. The nearer we draw to the end will, on the one hand, be the arduousness of service, and on the other, the profitlessness of it too to human eye.

Diversity and Unity: Each Needed in His Place

It is at once interesting and instructive to mark the varied lines of truth presented in the New Testament, all finding their common center in that blessed One who is the truth. We see this, both in the gospels and in the epistles. Each of the four Evangelists, under the direct guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, gives us a distinct view of Christ. Matthew presents Him in His Jewish relations-as the Messiah, the Son of David, Son of Abraham-heir of the promises made to the fathers. Mark presents Him as the earnest workman, the diligent servant, the laborious minister, the incessant teacher and preacher. Luke gives us the Man Christ Jesus, in His human relations, Son of man, Son of Adam. John is occupied with the Son of God, Son of the Father, the heavenly Man, in His heavenly relationships.

Thus each one has his own specific line. No two are alike, but all agree. There is lovely variety, but the most perfect harmony; there is diversity and unity. Matthew does not interfere with Mark, nor Mark with Luke, nor Luke with John. There is no collision, because each moves in his own proper orbit and all revolve round the one grand center.

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing. We could not afford to give up a single ray of the moral glory of the Son of God; and not only so, but we could not consent to ignore one of those instruments by which the Holy Ghost has presented Him to our view. We want them all. Each fills his own niche and fulfills his own service, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's as Peter's is from John's, or John's from James's. No two are alike, but all agree. There is no collision because, like the four Evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common center. The orbit is distinct, but the center is one. Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the Church. Peter gives us the Christian pilgrimage and God's government of the world.

James insists upon practical righteousness. John opens up the grand theme of eternal life, first with the Father, then manifested in the Son-communicated unto us, and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth or the beloved and honored instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How puerile it would be for any one to say, "I go in for Paul's line of things, only. James seems below the mark. Peter and John 1 do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me. The others do not reach my heart or feed my soul as he does."

All this we should at once denounce as the most sinful folly. It should not be tolerated for a moment. The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed center. The varied

instruments are all employed by one and the selfsame inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We need them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could do without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John. Each is needful in his place. Each has his niche to fill, his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to, and we should be doing serious damage to our own souls, as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

The early Corinthians fell into this grave error, and thus called forth a sharp rebuke from the Apostle Paul. Some were of Paul; some of Apollos; some of Cephas; some of Christ. All were wrong; and those who said they were of Christ were quite as wrong as any of the others. They were carnal, and walked as men. It was a grievous folly to be puffed up for one against another, inasmuch as they were all Christ's servants, and all belonged to the whole Church.

Nor is it otherwise now in the Church of God. There are varied kinds of workmen, and varied lines of truth; and it is our happy privilege, not to say our holy duty, to recognize and rejoice in them all. To be puffed up for one against another is to be "carnal, and walk as men." To depreciate any of Christ's servants is to depreciate the truth which he carries, and to forsake our own mercies. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." [But we must mark this difference-the servants used to write the various parts of Scripture were divinely inspired. This cannot be said of even the ablest servant of the Lord today.-Ed.]

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this too is the way to avoid sects, parties, cliques, and coteries in the Church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation-the Holy Scriptures. There are many members, many gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We need them all, and therefore God has given them all.

But, most surely, God has not given the various gifts and ministries for us to set one against another, but that we may humbly and thankfully avail ourselves of all, and profit by them according to His gracious purpose in giving them. If all were Pauls, where were the Peters? If all were Peters, where were the Johns?

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? What but to produce an imperfect Christian character? We are all sadly prone to one-sidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "the truth" we are sanctified-by all, not by some truth. We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God-a fatal mistake! "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the

Lord gave to every man?"

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work. We need them all, and we should value them all as His instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centers of cliques, thus splitting up the Church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices, but in every possible way endeavor "to keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

How is this great object to be attained? By keeping near the center-by abiding in Christ-by habitual occupation with Himself -by drinking deeply into His spirit and walking in His footsteps -by lying at His feet in true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind, by thorough consecration to His service, the furtherance of His cause, the promotion of His glory, the prosperity and blessing of every beloved member of His body.

Thus shall we be delivered from strife and contention, from the discussion of profitless questions, and baseless theories, from partiality, prejudice, and predilection. We shall be able to see and appreciate all the varied lines of truth converging upon the one divine center, the varied rays of light emanating from the one eternal source. We shall rejoice in the great fact that in all the ways and works of God, in every department of nature and grace, in things on earth and things in heaven, in time and in eternity, it is not a dull uniformity but a delightful variety. In a word, God's universal and eternal principle is "DIVERSITY AND UNITY."

Divine Authority: the Scriptures

The Lord Jesus Himself said (speaking of Moses) "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" John 5:47. His words were the words of God; He does not contrast the authority of what He said with that of the written Word, but with the means of communication. God has been pleased to employ that means as a permanent authority. Peter says, "No prophecy of the Scripture..." (2 Pet. 1:20). There have been many prophecies which are not written; they had the authority of God for those persons to whom they were addressed. For the Word speaks more than once of prophets -who must therefore have prophesied-without communicating their prophecies to us.

A multitude of things spoken by Jesus Himself are not reproduced in the Scriptures (John 21:25); so that it is not only a question of from whom we have heard a truth, but also of the character of that which has been communicated. When it is for the permanent profit of the people, or of the assembly of God, God caused it to be written in the Scriptures, and it abides for the instruction and the food of His children in all ages....

The Scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God furnished as such with His authority. They are the expression of His thoughts. They edify, they are profitable, but this is not all-they are inspired....

They teach, they judge the heart, they correct, they discipline according to righteousness, in order that the man of God may be perfect; that is, thoroughly instructed in the will of God, his mind formed after that will and completely furnished for every good work. The power for performing these comes from the actings of the Spirit. Safeguard from error, wisdom unto salvation, flow from the Scriptures; they are capable of supplying them....

Does this perfect and supreme authority of the Scriptures set aside ministry? By no means; it is the foundation of the ministry of the Word. One is a minister of the Word; one proclaims the Word-resting on the written Word which is the authority for all, and the warrant for all that a minister says, and imparting to his words the authority of God over the conscience of those whom he teaches or exhorts.... That which the Word says silences all opposition in the heart or mind of the believer. It was thus that the Lord answered Satan, and Satan himself was reduced to silence (Luke 4:1.13). He who does not submit to the words of God thereby shows himself to be a rebel against God.... The Old Testament left untold the history of Christ, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the formation of the assembly, because these facts being not yet accomplished could not be the subject of its historical and doctrinal instructions, and the assembly was not even the subject of prophecy. But all is now complete, as Paul tells us that he was a minister of the assembly to complete the Word of God (Col. 1:25). The subjects of revelation were then completed. God's Word speaks of grace as well as truth. It speaks of God's grace and love, who gave His only begotten Son that sinners like you and me might be with Him, know Him-deeply, intimately, truly know Him-and enjoy Him forever, and enjoy Him now, that the conscience perfectly purged might be in joy in His presence, without a cloud, without a reproach, without a fear. And to be these in His love, in such a way, is

perfect joy. The written Word will tell you the truth concerning yourself; but it will tell you the truth of a God of love, while unfolding the wisdom of His counsels....

Let me add, to my reader, that by far the best means of assuring himself of the truth and authority of the Word, is to read the Word itself.

The Dying Thief and the Centurion: Two Men Who Needed Same Saviour

It is at once interesting and profitable to contemplate the two distinct classes of persons presented in the New Testament as subjects of divine grace. We see one class whom we would deem very good, and another class whom we would consider very bad. Take, for example, Cornelius the centurion of Caesarea, and the thief on the cross. We could hardly find a more striking contrast than is presented in these two men; and yet they both needed - the one as well as the other - the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The pious centurion, as well as the dying thief, needed to be cleansed by the atoning blood of Christ to fit him for the presence of God. The one needed nothing more, and the other could do with nothing less, than that precious sacrifice. (We do not doubt in the least that Cornelius was a quickened soul, and one honestly acting up to his light, but he did not know salvation; and hence it is that his case illustrates so forcibly the indispensable necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus.)

Now it is full of interest and instruction to notice the condition of these two persons when first the salvation of God shone upon their souls. Look at the picture of Cornelius. Here it is in the veritable language of the Holy Ghost: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." Acts 10:1, 2. What a character! Might we not, naturally enough, inquire, "Whatever can such a man need beyond what he already possesses? - a devout, God-fearing, charitable, prayerful man. Surely he is alright." It would be difficult indeed to find anyone in a more hopeful condition. And yet there was one thing lacking, and that thing absolutely indispensable. There is, in the record of what he was, not a syllable about Jesus and His atoning blood. Let this be carefully noted. It may perhaps happen that this paper should fall into the hands of one who denies the need of the atonement of Christ - one who believes that human nature is Capable of being so far cultivated and ameliorated as to be able to dispense with the sacrificial death of the Son of God. Let such a one think of Cornelius. He, with all his piety and benevolence, required to send for Simon Peter, and to hear words of him whereby he and all his house should be saved. (Compare Acts 10:22 with Acts 11:14.)

Observe, he "was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." This is of the deepest moment: A man who was continually engaged in the practice of good works - works most valuable in themselves - was called upon to hearken to words, and find in those words salvation. It was not by any means that the works were not most precious so far as they went. So far from that, we are told by the inspired penman, that Cornelius received divine testimony as to their value. He was told that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God. They furnished precious evidence of the sincerity and earnestness of his soul, and as such they were owned of God.

But then, be it remembered, Cornelius had to hearken to words in order to be saved. What words?

Words about Jesus of Nazareth - Words about His holy, spotless life, His atoning death and triumphant resurrection. These were the "words" which were sent from heaven, through Peter's lips, and let fall upon the ear and into the heart of the earnest and pious centurion of Caesarea. These words opened up a new world, and presented a new object altogether to the heart of Cornelius. Prayers and alms might ascend as a memorial to heaven, but only the blood of Christ would bring Cornelius thither. Not all the prayers that ever ascended from earnest hearts, nor all the alms that ever flowed from the hand of benevolence, could conduct a guilty sinner into the presence of a holy God. The blood, and the blood alone, can bring the sinner nigh to God, be he centurion or malefactor. This is an all-important truth.

If such a one as Cornelius had to look off from all his works, and hearken to "words"; if this man of good report for piety and active benevolence needed to hear of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance before God; then it is obvious that, no matter what a man may possess in the shape of piety and alms-deeds, unless he

has Christ he is unsaved. If there be so much as the thickness of a gold leaf between the soul and Christ, there is no life. This cannot be too solemnly or too earnestly pressed upon the heart in this day of religiousness. The devil is busy in seeking to displace Christ by ordinances and ceremonies - to hide that blessed One behind the dark cloud of religious formality and routine. He is publishing far and wide dangerous and soul-destroying error as to the powers that are in man - the so-called dignity of human nature - what man can be brought to by education, science, and philosophy. The cross of Jesus Christ is set aside in various ways. Men are taught that they do not need that at all - that each one has in himself certain powers which only need to be properly cultivated and fully evolved in order to raise him to such a height of virtue and moral excellence as shall secure to him the possession of eternal felicity.

Now we solemnly warn the reader against all this fatal delusion. We hesitate not to pronounce it Satan's lie - a lie which he is craftily seeking to gild and decorate in the most fascinating manner in order to shut out all thought of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. If it should so happen that the name of Jesus is thought of or named at all, He is merely looked at as one who lived and died in order to set an example of exalted virtue which man, by the exercise of his innate power, can follow. The fall of man is denied, his total depravity explained away, his reason almost deified. Man is taught that he does not need the death of Christ to save him; he can save himself; that he does not need the Word and Spirit of God to guide him - he can guide himself by his own reason and moral sense.

How important, in the face of all this, is the lesson taught us in the 10th of Acts! There we see a man of exalted virtue and ardent piety; who laid on his family altar the continual sacrifice of prayer, and whose liberal hand was ever open to meet the need of his fellow creature. And yet this man had to listen to "words," and in those words to find salvation and a Savior. Let the reader turn for a moment to Peter's address in the house of Cornelius. What is the substance of it? What is its grand and glorious theme? JESUS! Yes. Jesus, the object of divine delight - Jesus, the subject of prophetic testimony - Jesus, the ground of the sinner's confidence and eternal salvation. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Mark those words, "believeth in Him." It is not merely believing something about Him, but believing in Him. It is faith in His Person that gives life and salvation to the ruined and

guilty sinner. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

We shall now turn to the dying thief and see what his case teaches us as to the power and value of the blood of Jesus. The contrast between him and Cornelius is full of interest and instruction. There are two ways in which Satan seeks to delude and destroy souls. He comes to one person and whispers into his ear, "You are not bad enough to need salvation." He comes to another and whispers into his ear, "You are too bad to think of ever getting it."

Now the centurion of Caesarea affords an answer to the former. The thief on the cross affords an answer to the latter. If anyone is so far led astray by the blinding power of the deceiver and destroyer of souls as to think that he does not need salvation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ - if he considers himself all right, and square, and safe, because he has never done anything very wrong - does not wish anyone ill - does his duty as a husband, a father, a master, a servant, a neighbor, a friend - attends to his religion, whatever it is - supposing for a moment that all this is true, to what does it amount? Clearly it does not go beyond the case of Cornelius, for he had an angel sent from heaven to tell him that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God. And what then? Did his prayers and his alms save him? No; they only proved that he was sincerely seeking to serve God according to his light - that he was anxious to find the truth and, through mercy, he found it - found it in Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, buried, and raised again. It is not by any means that his works were not genuine and valuable. They were; but it is precisely because they were so, that we learn so forcibly from his history that nothing but the atoning death of the Son of God can save even the very best of men.

Then again if anyone should say, "I am too bad, too wretched, too guilty to be saved; I am beyond the reach of mercy," let such a one look at the case of the dying thief. It would be hard indeed to find anyone lower down in the scale than he. He had been condemned by the law of his country to die an ignominious death on account of his crimes; and not only so, but while hanging on the cross, and standing at the very portal of the eternal world, he was engaged in the terrible wickedness of railing upon the Son of God. It may be said, "He did not know Him to be the Son of God when he was railing upon Him." True; but still he did rail upon Him and in so doing he proved the deep moral darkness in which his guilty soul was plunged.

It is important to see that both the malefactors were engaged in blaspheming and insulting the suffering Savior. It greatly magnifies the grace that shines so brightly in the salvation of the penitent. Matthew tells us in his narrative that "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Matt. 27:44. So also in Mark we read, "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him." Mark 15:32.

Thus then the dying thief stands before us as a specimen of the very worst form of fallen humanity.

There is not a single redeeming feature. He was a condemned malefactor nailed to a cross and, in that awful condition, reviling and blaspheming the Son of God. But he was not beyond the reach of divine love; no, he was just one in which that love could display its triumph. Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost. And that word "lost" describes the condition of men who may stand at the very antipodes - at the very opposite points of what is called the moral, social, and religious world. The thief was lost; the centurion was lost; and albeit, the one is presented to us at the very

lowest point of guilt and degradation; and the other, as treading the lofty walks of piety and benevolence: yet they were both, in themselves, lost, guilty, and undone, needing, the one as well as the other, to be cleansed by the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.

But let us look more closely at the narrative of the dying thief. It is very evident that the Holy Spirit in Luke takes him up at the moment in which the first ray of divine light penetrated his dark and benighted soul. Matthew and Mark present the crowning evidence of his guilt. Luke lets us see the earliest dawns of divine grace (Luke 23:39,43). We must put both together in order to have a proper view of the penitent thief. The divine record of aggravated guilt enhances the value of divine grace. It proves that there is salvation, full, free, and everlasting salvation, for the very vilest of men - that no one is beyond the reach of the sovereign mercy and grace of God. This is what we learn from the case of the dying thief, looked at by itself; but when we look at it in connection with Cornelius we learn, in the fullest possible manner, the perfect efficacy and absolute necessity of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The dying thief shows me the former; the centurion shows me the latter. The one needed nothing more, the other could do with nothing less, than the propitiatory sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let all who think themselves too bad to be saved, look at the thief on the cross. Let all who think themselves too good to require salvation, look at the centurion of Caesarea. If the centurion needed the blood of Jesus, then who can do without it? And if the thief was saved by the blood of Jesus, who need despair?

And now let us mark the progress of the work of grace in the soul of the dying malefactor. He was in every respect a fit and proper subject for the action of that grace.

We may observe then that the moment the arrow of conviction entered his soul, he began at the right point, even at that which Scripture declares to be the beginning of wisdom. He says to his fellow, "Dost thou not fear God?" What a change! We are not told what it was that produced such a change. But we know that between the point presented in Matthew and Mark, and that presented in Luke, a mighty change had taken place. A ray of divine light had entered his soul. We may believe that the eye of the poor dying thief had been opened to see something of the divine glory of that blessed One who hung beside him on the cursed tree.

"Dost thou not fear God?" he says, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." He does not say, "Dost thou not fear wrath, • judgment, or future punishment?" No; it is the fear of God that is before his eyes; and it is well to note this. Very many are governed by the fear of future punishment; and no doubt the Spirit of God may at times press that home in overwhelming power upon the soul. It is right to urge upon men the solemn importance of fleeing from the wrath to come - to set before them faithfully the certain consequences of their sins - to point out, in great plainness of speech, the inevitable doom of all who die in their sins. All this is right and seasonable; but then we must bear in mind that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

The Holy Ghost will always impress the heart with a sense of the seriousness of having to do with God Himself, and then it is not so much a question of the consequences of sin as of the hatefulness of the thing itself in the sight of God. When God gets His right place in the heart, everything else will follow; we shall then look at ourselves, our ways, our condition, our sins, and

the state of our hearts, our nature and all its fruits, in the light of what God is. A person may seem to be deeply affected for a time by the fear of wrath and eternal punishment. The thought of hell fire, of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and the worm that never dies, may cause a chill to pass through the heart, and check for a moment the sinner in his career of sin. But there may not be one particle of the true fear of God in all this and, as a consequence, when the momentary terror passes off, the tide of lust and passion returns with augmented force and bears the man away like a cork upon its bosom.

Not so when the Spirit of God lays upon the soul the solemn sense of what it is to have to do with God - when He fills the heart with the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Then sin is not measured by its consequences to us, but by its hatefulness to Him. We shall not be so much occupied with the results of sin, real and terrible as these assuredly are, but with the vileness of sin itself. We shall hate sin for its own sake, as a thing which God hates. We shall fully own what is sin's just condemnation, but we shall chiefly dwell upon the true nature and character of sin, in its principle, as seen in the light of the holiness of God.

But it is truly wonderful to mark the way in which this dying thief is led on by divine teaching. He seems to pass with amazing rapidity from stage to stage laying hold of great foundation truths of revelation. He takes his true place as a sinner, justly condemned. "We receive the due reward of our deeds." Instead of railing upon the blessed Lord, and derisively saying, "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us," he, under the holy influence of the fear of God, owns himself justly condemned, bears testimony to his companion, and faithfully reproves his blasphemy - a blasphemy too in which he had himself so lately participated.

He then turns to Jesus and owns His spotless manhood- that great foundation truth of Christianity. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Here he offers a flat contradiction to the chief priests, the elders, and scribes, the nation of Israel, and the world at large. All had agreed to deliver Him as an evildoer; but this dying malefactor declared that He had done nothing amiss; and although it may be said that this testimony only goes the length of declaring that it was for nothing amiss that He had been condemned to death, yet the grand fact remains untouched; namely, the thief on the cross gave the lie to the world in reference to Jesus. The world had condemned Him and cast Him out. It had nailed Him to a shameful cross - the most ignominious death it could have imposed upon Him. But in the midst of the dark shadows of that awful cross, the clear and unreserved testimony came forth from the lips of a convicted and penitent malefactor, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

Precious, invaluable, glorious testimony! How it must have refreshed the heart of the Savior in the midst of all the reproach and blasphemy, the opposition and hatred of men and devils, to hear from the lips of this poor thief such a testimony! The blessed Lord had been forsaken by all His disciples. They fled from Him in the dark and evil hour. How like man! The whole world - the Jew, the Gentile, the civil and ecclesiastical powers, the hosts of hell - all were ranged against the Son of God. But in the midst of this scene of untold and unimaginable horrors, one solitary voice breaks forth in accents clear and bold and bears this testimony, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

The Dying Thief and the Centurion: Two Men Who Needed Same Saviour

It has sometimes been remarked that the thief had no opportunity of doing good works, and if by this it be meant that he performed no deeds of charity, that he gave no alms, that he brought forth no fruits of active benevolence, it is a just remark; and if such things were necessary to salvation, then assuredly the thief was unsaved. His hands were nailed to a cross; they could not therefore be stretched forth in acts of charity. His feet were nailed likewise; they could not therefore tread the pathway of active benevolence. All this is clear enough. His feet, while he had the use of them, had run in the highway of sin. His hands, while he had the use of them, had been stretched forth in deeds of violence; and now that he was nailed to the cross, his doings and goings were at an end. He had used his hands and his feet for the devil, but he had no opportunity of using them for God. If therefore salvation were in any wise by works, the thief's case was hopeless.

And be it further noted that the thief on the cross knew nothing of the privilege of the great Christian ordinances. He was never baptized and he never received the Lord's supper, so far as the divine record informs us. This too is important. It is not - need we say it? - that we do not value exceedingly both of these precious institutions in their true place. Quite the reverse. So also as to good works; we hold them to be of unquestionable value. God has prepared a path of good works in which His people are to walk continually; and hence, if any profess themselves Christians, and do not walk in the divinely appointed and prepared path of good works, their profession is hollow and worthless. Mere lip profession is valueless to God and man; but where there is divine life in the soul, that life will show itself in fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.

So also as to Christian ordinances. The Holy Scriptures teach us their true place, character, nature, and object. They teach us that baptism - the great initiatory ordinance of Christianity - sets forth, in the most impressive and significant manner, our death to all that in which we stood by nature - death to sin - death to everything in which, as children of the first Adam, we stood. They teach us that the ordinance of the Lord's supper sets forth the Lord's death, the giving of His body, the shedding of His blood. Who then could think of penning a single line to touch such institutions as these, or detract from their value? Surely no one who loves Christ or bows to the sovereign authority of His Word. It will not therefore, we trust, be supposed that we undervalue ordinances or good works when we call the reader's attention to the fact that the thief on the cross neither participated in the one nor performed the other. But we do feel there is immense power in this simple fact. There is immense weight in the fact that there is one in heaven, a ransomed spirit present with the Lord in the bright paradise, above, who was never baptized and never received the Lord's supper, and who never bestowed the weight of a feather in charity. It may be said that, had he lived, he would. No doubt; but he did not, and hence the fact stands forth in all its clearness and telling power to speak in the ears of all who trust in ordinances and good works, if haply they will hear and ponder the precious and all-important truth. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." Titus 3:5.

Baptism has its place and its value; but if any were to say to us, "Unless you are baptized you cannot be saved," we would point them to the thief on the cross and say, "There is a man who passed into paradise without ever passing under the water of baptism." So also as to the Lord's supper, and so as to the entire range of what are called good works. The thief was saved without them. He was saved by grace, by blood, by faith. This cannot possibly be too deeply pondered in this day of busy religiousness and confidence in ordinances. The case of the dying thief is one of

commanding interest and unspeakable importance. It stands like a powerful breakwater to stem the tide of ritualism and legal religiousness which is bearing away millions upon its bosom, and hurrying them down to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The thief was saved without ordinances, and we therefore conclude that ordinances are not essential to salvation; ordinances have their value on earth, but they never brought anyone to heaven.

But then let us look a little more closely at this marvelous narrative of the dying thief. Did he not, after all, do good works? Yes, verily. He did one of the greatest works that any saved sinner can do. And what was that? He bore witness to the truth. True it is that his feet and his hands were nailed to the cross, and were therefore powerless; but his eye, and his heart, and his tongue were free. His eye was free to gaze upon the Son of God; his heart was free to believe in His blessed Person; and his tongue was free to confess His name in the face of a hostile world. Now to believe on the Son of God, and confess His name, make up the sum of Christianity. When our Lord, in the days of His flesh, was asked by some, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" His answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John 6:28, 29.) And the inspired Apostle declares, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. 10:9, 10.

All this the dying thief, through infinite mercy, did; and had he come down from the cross and lived to the age of Methuselah, he could have done nothing more glorious, nothing more precious to God, than what he did during the few moments of his new life - a life begun, continued, and ended, on the cross, so far as this world was concerned, but resumed in that glorious world above, where death can never enter. He bore witness to the truth. This is the grand object of all Christian life. The great moral regulator is the confession of the Lordship of Jesus. The thief rendered this confession. "He said unto Jesus, Lord." He not only owned His spotless, His perfect manhood, but he owned Him as Lord.

It is singularly interesting to mark the way in which this precious soul was led on. After having rebuked sin and warned the sinner, in the person of his fellow; after having owned the truth as to himself and his condition, in contrast with that spotless One who hung beside him on the cross, he turned to Jesus, and his whole soul seemed absorbed with that peerless Object. He seemed, as it were, to travel with marvelous rapidity through all the stages of the great "mystery of godliness" referred to in 1 Tim. 3:16, of which the foundation is God manifested on earth, and the topstone, Man glorified in heaven. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Glorious mystery! May we enter more into its profound and wondrous depths!

We do not, of course, undertake to predicate as to the extent or clearness of the thief's apprehensions of all this precious truth; but one thing is plain, he was taught to recognize in Jesus, "God... manifest in the flesh." And, further, he was enabled to look through the heavy clouds that gathered around that awful cross, and see the bright beams of glory in the future. "He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Marvelous fruit of divine teaching! A few moments before he had been reviling the Blessed One; but now he bows in spirit

before Him - owns Him as Lord - speaks in accents befitting the most mature and calm confidence of a coming kingdom, and finally casts himself upon that almighty grace which shines in the words, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify* Me." Psalm 50:15. "Lord, remember me." He forms that mysterious chain of three links. He puts "Lord" at one end, "me" at the other, and connects them both by that one powerful word "remember." This is salvation.

The moment any poor ruined, guilty, self-destroyed sinner becomes linked to the Man who was nailed to the tree, salvation is an eternally settled fact. It matters not who he is or what he is. His sins may be as crimson, or as scarlet; they may be as black as midnight; they may be multiplied and magnified; but the moment he becomes linked with a Savior-God, he is saved in the power of an eternal salvation. His sins and his iniquities are blotted out as a thick cloud, and he is brought to God in all the credit and value of the name of Jesus.

Thus it was with the dying thief. He found a full, a free, and an eternal salvation on the spot. The Lord Jesus went far beyond all his thoughts and all his desires. He had said, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The Lord tells him He will do far better for him than that; "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." In these words we have the three grand features of the salvation revealed in the gospel; namely, a present salvation, a personal salvation, and a perfect salvation. "To-day" - "shalt thou" - "be with Me." We do not dwell upon these points; they are familiar to most of our readers; but we offer one or two remarks as to our Lord's style in this scene.

It is well worthy of notice that there is not one upbraiding word, not a single reference to the past, no allusion to his old habits or to his recent blasphemy or reviling - nothing whatever of this sort. It would not be in keeping with the gracious ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. He saved all who came to Him, or who looked to Him, because He came to do the Father's will, and all that came to Him were drawn of the Father.

And it is the same in every case. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." We may remember them, revert to them, be cut to the heart and bowed to the dust by the remembrance; but the moment we come to Jesus, all is blotted out, all forgiven, all forgotten. Such is His grace - such the divine perfection of His work - such the charm of His style. The poor guilty, self-condemned thief is received without a single demur. He casts himself upon Jesus in simple confidence, and the immediate answer is, "To-day." It is as though He had said to him, "You need not wait for the kingdom. You shall taste the joy of being with Me long before the glories of the kingdom dawn upon this world. This very day I shall have you with Me in that bright paradise above, whither I am going."

This truly was grace, and salvation by grace. "Thou... with Me." Here is the chain again. The thief had said, "Lord, remember me"; and Jesus answers him by "Thou... with Me." The dying Savior and the dying thief were linked together by a marvelous chain of grace; and that very day they were together in paradise. "With Me" settled everything. There was nothing to wait for. All was done. Ordinances were not necessary. What ordinances could add aught to the atoning work of Jesus? It was Jesus for the thief on the cross and, therefore, it was the thief with Jesus in paradise. Nothing can be simpler. The thief had no plea to urge, no claim, no title. Most gladly could we linger over this wondrous scene; but we must close, and ere we do so, we shall merely

leave this one question with the reader. "Are you saved?" This is a plain, pointed question; let it receive a plain, pointed answer.

Do not put it away; do not give it a half answer. Answer it fully; answer it now. "Are you saved?" If not, let us exhort you solemnly not to put off this most momentous matter, but now, even now, like the dying thief, cast yourself upon the Lord Jesus.

Encouragement for One in Trying Circumstances

Read Job 3; Jer. 20:14.18; Matt. 11:25.30

The Spirit of God in the above scriptures has furnished us with a very striking and edifying contrast.

Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. He sighed for rest, but sought it amid the shades of death and in the darkness of the tomb. Dismal rest!

In the prophet Jeremiah we see the same thing. Both these beloved and honored saints of God, when overwhelmed by outward pressure, lost for a moment that well-balanced condition of soul which genuine faith ever imparts.

Now the blessed Master stands before us in Matt. 11 in glorious contrast. That chapter records a number of circumstances which seem entirely against Him. Herod's prison would seem to have shaken the Baptist's confidence. The men of that generation had refused the double testimony of righteousness and grace in the ministry of John, and of Christ Himself. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had remained impenitent in view of His "mighty works." What then? Did the Master take up the language of His servants Job and Jeremiah? By no means. His perfect will was perfectly blended with that of His Father; and hence, "At that time [when all seemed against Him] Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Here it was that Jesus found His rest. And here it is that He invites all who "labor and are heavy laden," to "find rest." He does not point us to the grave as our resting place; but He graciously stoops down and invites us to share His yoke with Him -to drink into His "meek and lowly" spirit - to bear about a mortified will - to meet the darkest dispensations, and the most trying circumstances, with a "thank God," and an "even so." This is divine "rest." It is rest in life, and not in death - rest in Christ, and not in the grave.

Reader, do you ever find yourself disposed to wish for the grave as a relief from pressure? If so, look at the above scriptures. Think of them, pray over them, and seek to find your rest where Jesus found His, in having no will of your own.

We often think that a change of circumstances would make us happy. We imagine if this trial were removed and that deficiency made up, we would be all right. Let us remember, when tempted to think thus, that what we want is not a change of circumstances, but victory over self. May the Lord ever give us this victory, and then we shall enjoy peace.

Family Affection

There is no atmosphere which seems to suit the neighborhood of heaven better than that of family affection. We have witness of this in the Word.

Jacob was dying. Joseph brings his two sons to the bedside. The patriarch has an important business to fulfill under the Holy Ghost. He has to adopt these children of a strange woman into the family, and give them the highest privileges of the loins of Abraham. He has to utter the counsel of God concerning them - that the elder was to serve the younger. And he has to give Joseph one portion above his brethren - the earnest of the right and inheritance of the first-born.

But ere he sets himself to finish all this weighty matter which concerned the order of the people of God on the earth he indulges his heart in company with his son, going over some family recollections, and retouching in his soul some of the tenderest personal sensibilities. He speaks to Joseph about his mother's grave, when she had died, and where she was buried. This is not without its purpose. He was on the skirts of the heavenly land, where family affection is to bloom in its full loveliness, where the many-mansioned house of the Father is to witness the dwelling of the brethren and the marriage of the Lamb; and the heart thus in the glow of family happiness was in spirit nearest to it.

So in 2 Timothy. Paul was ready to be offered. The time of his departure was at hand. And he has a weighty business to do with Timothy - to advise, encourage, and instruct him, under the Holy Ghost, touching the churches here. But ere he enters on that, like the dying patriarch, he indulges his heart in company with his dear son over some family recollections. He tells Timothy of his own forefathers, and reminds him of the faith of his mother and grandmother. He calls up the remembrance of Timothy's personal affection for him, thus to gratify his own heart by such glances at past days, when the flow of fervent desire went from heart to heart between them.

And this was the atmosphere in which the spirit of Paul thus moved and had its being, now that he had come to the very borders of the heavenly country. It suited - none better - those purer regions. And happy to have such a witness of such a truth. The Spirit, conducting the elect, whether Jacob or Paul, whether in the earliest or latest days, to the neighborhood of the holy Jerusalem, gives them to breathe the element of simple family affection, and to indulge the heart in the joy of well-known personal attachment.

Family Character and Family Religion: Family Character

"And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees." Gen. 11:26-28.

FAMILY CHARACTER

We learn from Scripture that the family of Shem had become very corrupt in the days of Terah, the 6th or 7th from Shem; they were serving false gods. But the power of the Spirit and the call of the God of glory visited the ear and the heart of Abram, the son of Terah, and separated him from that corruption.

We also know that a godly influence extended itself from this in the family. Terah the father, Sarah the wife, and Lot the nephew, join Abram in this, and they all leave the land of Mesopotamia together. Abram's brother Nahor, however, did not come within this influence. This is to be much observed, for the like of it we may witness every day. One of the family becomes first the subject of divine power, and then family religion, or the knowledge of the Lord in the household, spreads itself, but some remain uninfluenced.

We know that each quickened soul must be the object of the effectual drawings of the Father (see John 6:44, 45) but I speak of the history or manifested character; and, as we have seen, Nahor's household remains unmoved in this day of visitation. He and his wife continue in Mesopotamia, and thrive there. Children are born to them; goods and property increase. They pursue an easy and respectable life, but they do not grow in the knowledge of God, and bear no testimony, or but an indistinct one.

The character of Nahor's family was thus formed. They were not in gross darkness and corrupt like the descendants of Ham in Canaan, among whom Abram had now gone to sojourn. They had a measure of light derived from their connection with Terah and Abram, and as descendants of Shem; but all that was sadly dimmed by the cherished principles of the world from which they had refused to separate themselves, and a family character and standing were thus formed.

This is serious! and of daily occurrence among us, and of needed application to our consciences.

We lose sight of this family for a time as they are not the direct object of the Spirit's notice; but being connected with Abram, in process of time tidings about them reach Abram in the distant place of his pilgrimage (chapter 22).

Bethuel was the son of Nahor - one of his many sons, rather, and the one most brought into view. He had flourished in the world, and though perhaps a man of little energy or character himself, had a son named Laban who evidently knew how to manage his affairs and to advance himself advantageously in life. He seems, as we say, to have known the value of money, for the sight of gold could open his mouth with a very hearty and religious welcome even to a stranger (chapter 24). Here we reach a period in the history of this family which is chiefly to be considered.

A fresh energy of the Spirit is about to visit it. As I have already observed, this family is not in the gross darkness of the Canaanites, nor in the idolatrous condition of Terah's house (see Josh. 24:2) when the God of glory called Abram. They had been brought into a certain measure of light, and within a certain standing, by profession, as Abram's act and word seem to allow (Gen. 24:4). Thus the Spirit's testimony had put this household in some sense apart from the dark state of the men of the world, and it becomes us seriously to notice the nature of that visitation of the Spirit, for it will be found to be a separating power or visitation. As the call of the God of glory had before disturbed the state of things in Terah's house, so now the mission of Eliezer disturbed the state of things in Bethuel's house. Abram had been separated from home and kindred, and so is Rebecca now to be. It leaves the serious impression that a respectable professing family may need to be visited by the same energy of the Spirit as a more worldly or idolatrous family.

It is a disturbing or separating power of God which now comes into this family - not simply a comforting or edifying power. The ministry of Eliezer (God's servant, as well as Abram's) came to Bethuel's house to draw Rebecca out of it, and to lead on that very journey which two generations before the God of glory had led Abram. I judge that there is a lesson in this which is much to be pondered. A professing, decent family have to be aroused, and a fresh act of separation produced in the midst of it.

But there is another lesson in this history to which I would call your attention.

Rebecca comes forth at the call of Abram's servant, but a character had previously been formed, as it is with us all, more or less, before we are converted. The separating call and power of the Lord is answered, but it finds us of a certain character, in a certain complexion of mind. It finds us, it may be, as Cretians (Titus 1), or as brothers and sisters of Laban, or the like. Character and mind derived from nature, from education, or from family habits, we shall take with us after we have been born of the Spirit, and carry in us from Mesopotamia to the house of Abram.

It is serious, as I observed before, that a respectable professing family is visited by a separating, and not merely by an edifying, energy of the Spirit; and serious it is that with the quickening or converting power of the Spirit, the force of early habits and education, or family character, will cling still. The story of Rebecca reads to us these serious lessons.

I need only briefly speak of what her way was in the further stages of it. It is a well-known story, sadly betraying what we may call the family character. Laban, her brother with whom she had grown up and who was evidently the active self-important one in his father's house, was a subtle, knowing, worldly man. And the only great action in which Rebecca was called to take part gives occasion to her exercising the same principles. In the procuring of the blessing for her son Jacob we see this Laban-leaven working mightily. The family character sadly breaks out then. The readiness of nature to act and take its way shows itself very busily. Her mind was too little accustomed to repose in the sufficiency of God, and too much addicted to calculate and to lean its hopes on its own inventions.

What have we to do then but to watch against the peculiar tendency and habit of our own mind to rebuke nature sharply, that we may be sound or morally healthful in the faith (Titus 1:13), not to excuse this tendency of our nature, but rather the more to suspect it and mortify it for His sake who has given us another nature.

These lessons we get from the story of this distinguished woman. Beyond this, her way is not much tracked by the Spirit. Was it that He was grieved with her, and leaves her unnoticed? At any rate she reaps nothing but disappointment from the seed she had sown. No good comes of her schemes and contrivances, but the reverse. She loses her favorite, Jacob, and never sees him after her own schemes and contrivances ended in his long exile.

But there is this further; Jacob got his mind formed by the same earliest influence. He was all his days a slow hearted, calculating man. His plan in getting the birthright first, and then the blessing; his confidence in his own arrangements, rather than in the Lord's promise, when he met his brother Esau; and his lingering at Shechem, and settling there instead of pursuing a pilgrim's life in the land like his fathers; all this betrays the nature and the working of the old family character.

What need have we to watch the early seed sown in the heart! Yea, to watch the early or late seed which we are helping to sow in others' hearts! For the details of this history warn us of such things still.

The birth of Esau and Jacob is given us at the close of chapter 25, and as they grow up to be boys, occasion arises to let us look in at the family scene, which is truly humbling.

This was one of the families of God then on the earth - nay, the most distinguished, in which lay the hopes of all blessing to the whole earth, and where the Lord had recorded His name.

But what do we see? Isaac the father had dropped into the stream of human desires; he loved his son Esau because he ate of his venison! Esau, as a child of the family, was entitled to the care and provision of the house, and Isaac and Rebecca surely gave him all that, together with their parental love; but for Isaac to make him his favorite because he ate of his venison, this was sad and evil indeed. Do we not in this see some further illustration of our subject? Isaac had been reared tenderly. He had never been away from the side of his mother, the child of whose old age he was. His education perhaps had relaxed him too much, and he appears before us as a soft, self-indulgent man.

But oh what sad mischief opens to our view in all this family scene! Are we saying too much, that one parent was catering to nature in one of the children, and the other to the other? Isaac's love of venison may have encouraged Esau in the chase, as Rebecca's cleverness, brought from her brother's house in Padan-aram, seems to have formed the mind and character of her favorite Jacob.

Oh, what sorrow and cause of humiliation is here! Is this a household of faith? Is this a God-fearing family? Yes, children of promise and heirs of His kingdom are these: Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob.

At another time and in other actions they delight and edify us. See Isaac in the greater part of Chapter 26; his conduct is altogether worthy of a heavenly stranger on the earth; suffering, he threatens not, but commits himself to Him who judges righteously. He suffers and takes it patiently; and his altar and his tent witness his holy, unearthly character. So with Rebecca in chapter 24. In faith she consents to cross the desert alone with a stranger because her heart was set upon the heir of the promises, leaving home and kindred, "forgetting her father and her father's house." But here in chapter 27, what shame fills the scene, and we blush and are confounded that heirs of promise and children of God could so carry themselves!

But, alas! the heart is not only base and corrupt, it is daring also, taking its naughtiness even into the sanctuary, as the close of this story shows.

The word to Aaron, long after this, was, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation." Lev. 10:9. For nature was not to be animated in order to wait on the service of God. Nature was not to be raised, or set in action, by its food, for the fulfilling of the duties of the sanctuary; strong drink might exhilarate and give ebullition to animal spirits, but this was not the qualification of a priest.

But even into such a mischief as this, Isaac seems to have been betrayed. "Take, I pray thee," said he to Esau, "thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."

He was going to do the last religious act of a patriarchal priest, and he calls (as for wine and strong drink) for the food of mere nature to animate and fill him for the service of conferring God's blessing! What abomination!

We may all be conscious that much of nature soils our holy things; much of the excitement of the flesh may be mistaken for the work of the Spirit. We may be aware of this in the places of communion, and to our sorrow; we confess it as evil, and weakness, and watch against it; but to prepare for this is sad abomination.

We know full well the guile that Rebecca and Jacob practiced in this scene. Nothing comes of this subtlety and fleshliness. The holiness of the Lord lays it all in ashes. Isaac loves his Esau; Rebecca never sees Jacob again, for her promised "few days" were an exile of twenty years, and the calculating supplanter finds himself in the midst of toils, and an alien from his father's house for a long and dreary season. All is disappointment, and rebuked by the holiness of the Lord.

But it remains for us to see grace assuming its high, triumphant place and attitude. Its holiness is established thus by the Lord with great decision, setting aside all advantages which sin had promised itself; and then divine grace reigns.

In the great mystery of redemption, grace takes its triumphant place in the promise that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head; but there is also the full execution of all the decrees of holiness against the sin, for death came in as was threatened, and penalties fell on the man, and on the woman, and a curse upon the serpent. So here: Isaac loses his purpose touching Esau; Rebecca has to part with Jacob; and Jacob himself, instead of getting the birthright and the blessing in his own way, has to go forth a penniless exile from the place of his inheritance and the scene of all his promised enjoyments. The only wages of sin is death; but grace takes its high place and shines through Jehovah's burning holiness.

Even the misery to which his sin had reduced the object of God's grace, sets off its glory. When Abram's servant had of old gone forth on a like errand (chapter 24) he had camels and attendants to make his journey across this very desert honorable and pleasant. But now the son and heir for whom the honor of the house and the joys of the marriage were preparing, has to lie down alone, unfriended, uncared for, unsheltered, the stones of the place his only pillow. But grace, which turns the shadow of death into the morning, is preparing a glorious rest for him; he listens to the voice of

wondrous love, and he is shown worlds of light in this place of solitude and darkness. He dreams and sees the high heavens open to him in that dark and barren spot on which he then lay, and he hears the Lord of heaven at the top of this mystic scene speaking to him in words of promise only! He sees himself, though so erring, so poor, and so vile, thus associated with an all-pervading glory full of present mercies and consolations. The holiness of grace still leaves him a wanderer; but the riches of grace will tell him of present consolation and of future sure glories. But this has borne me a little beyond my immediate subject.

There is then such a thing as family character; and the recollection of this, when we are dealing with ourselves, should make us watchful and jealous over all our peculiar habits and tendencies; and when we are dealing with others it should make us considerate and of an interceding spirit, remembering that there is a force of early habit and education working more or less in all of us. But let us not forget that if a certain family character clings to us, or habits with which birth has connected us, so are we debtors to exhibit that character with which our birth and education in the heavenly family have since connected us.

In the 8th chapter of John the Lord reasons upon this ground, that our sonship, or birth, or family connections, are to be determined by our character or doings. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Thus we see the necessity of our bearing the character of that family into which the new birth introduces.

But we are exhorted also to the same thing - to take after our Father's character in the cultivation of all virtues. The Lord says, "Be ye perfect"; and the Apostle takes up the same thought in pressing the duty of love and forgiveness, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children." Eph. 5:1 (N. Trans.).

Oh then that we may be set on the cultivation of this family character! Let the old man go down and the new man rise and assert his place in us! Let the character we have gathered from natural ties or natural habits be watched against, and the character of our heavenly birth be cherished and expressed to His praise who has begotten us again out of the death in which we lay.

Family Character and Family Religion: Family Religion

Among the sons of Noah, religion was connected with Shem rather than with his brothers, and from him came the separated people.

In the progress of a few generations, however, this religious family became corrupt; for in less than three hundred years (and we know not how much earlier) we find them serving other gods (Josh. 24:2). This is a common history even to this day. Families, as well as churches, are seen in a sadly degenerate and corrupt condition, though once they were known for their zeal and service.

The Spirit of God, however, in the sovereignty of grace, visits a son of Terah, of the 8th generation from Shem. The call of the God of glory came to Abram and separated him from those corruptions, and from country and kindred and his father's house, to fashion him as a new piece of workmanship for the Lord (Acts 7:2).

Abram, it appears, made this call known to his family and, as is often seen to this day among ourselves, this communication has a certain influence among them. Family religion springs from this.

The power of the gospel is known at first by one member, and from thence it spreads. And the Lord would have it so. It is a bad symptom, as we may see presently, where this does not take place.

So here. Terah, the father, gets ready. Nahor, one of his sons we may presume from the whole narrative, was not much under this influence; for he, his wife and children, all abide where they were. But Abram and his wife, and Lot (the son of Terah's deceased son Haran) set out on the divinely appointed journey. Terah, the father, apparently takes the lead (chapter 11:31).

But ere I go farther with this narrative I would ask, Was all this entirely right on Abram's part? The call had been to him. On him the energy of the Spirit had come. Within the range of that energy or influence the family, it is true, may be brought; but still, did it not belong to Abram to fill that place which divine energy had manifestly assigned him? Was there not some conferring with flesh and blood on Abram's part ere Terah was allowed to take the lead in this great movement under the Spirit of God? I rather judge that there was, and that this has to account for the delay at Haran, and for the death of Terah there, and for the putting forth of a second energy from the Lord in calling Abram from Haran (chapters 11:31; 12:1).

This is all admonitory to us. Family religion is beautiful, but family order or human claims are not to assume the rights of the Spirit. It is beautiful to see Cornelius, or any other in like circumstances, bringing his friends and kindred within that influence which was visiting his house; but if flesh and blood, or human relationship, disturb the sovereign progress of the Spirit, we may expect a halt at Haran, at the half way house, and the need of a second call-in some sense a second -to set the soul in the path of God afresh.

We may mark and distinguish these things for profit and admonition. However, under the renewed energy of the Spirit Abram renews his journey, and Sarah his wife, and Lot his orphan nephew, accompany him. It is a scene of family religion still. And in Lot we see one who was within the general or family influence. We read of no distinct call on him, or of any sacrifice from him. Not that he represents a mere professor, or one who attaches himself to the people of God for some selfish end. No; he was a "righteous man," and had a living soul that could be, and was, vexed with the wickedness of the wicked (2 Pet. 2:8). But his entrance into the household of faith expresses no energy. It was effected in a family way, as I have been observing-as a thousand cases in our own day. And good such things are. It is happy when Sarah the wife, or Terah the father, or Lot the nephew of these latter days will go along with our Abrams. This would not be, we know, without the drawing and teaching of the Father. And Lot was as surely elect of God as Abram. But the energy of the call of God is not manifested in him as in Abram-distinctions which we cannot fail to mark continually. It was a personal thing characteristically with Abram; it was a family thing characteristically with Lot. And according to all this, in the very first scene in which Lot was called to act in a personal or independent way, we see his weakness.

Abram gives him the choice of the land. And he makes a choice. Now it is not merely in his choosing the goodliest that our hearts condemn him, but in his making a choice at all. In every respect Abram had title to have the first choice, as we speak. He was the elder, both in years and relationship. He was principal in all that action which had drawn them to this distant land, and Lot was but, as it were, attached to him. Noble it was in Abram, and generous, in surrendering his right to his younger. But Lot was insensible to all this, and he undertakes to make the choice, and then (naturally in the course of such a beginning) he chooses on an entirely worldly principle. He takes the well-watered plain for his flocks and his herds, although that took him near the defiled city (chapter 13).

This first trial of Lot is thus a painful witness against him. It argues the weakness in which faith or the kingdom of God had been held in his soul. Abram's way was very different, for the voice of the God of glory had been powerfully heard by him, detaching him from that world to which Lot was still adhering. And all this has language in our ears to which we are to take heed.

It is soon discovered what a disappointing world Lot was choosing. The well-watered plain soon becomes a field of battle; and had it not been for Abram, or Abram's God, Lot would have lost his liberty there, and all his possessions.

But it is still more sad that this first disappointment does not free his heart from its unholy attachment. He takes up with Sodom a second time, till he is forced to remove by the hand of God Himself. When the watered plain became a field of slaughter, and Lot still refused to learn its character and to leave it, he must learn it by its becoming burning heaps in the day of the Lord.

Melancholy catastrophe! Shameful end of an earthly-minded believer! What a voice for us in all this! Here was a saving "so as by fire"-a running out of a house in flames, an inglorious departure from the world! We may lay the admonition to heart, and watch against the first look toward the watered plains of Sodom.

In the whole of this we indeed get great lessons, whether of comfort or of warning. It tells us that family religion is a beautiful thing, and that true godliness may begin in that way as in Abram's

house. But it admonishes each one of us to take good care to cultivate godliness in a very personal way, lest our religion have the weakness of a mere general or family influence, and in a little season leave us stranded by the way.

Under Abram, family religion, as I was observing, did spread, but not under Lot; for his wife continued with the mind of Sodom in her, and is made a beacon light to warn passengers on their way, to this hour. His two daughters defile themselves and become the parents of two such corrupt seeds as are under special prohibition as to any place in God's house (Deut. 23:3), and his sons-in-law, when he spoke to them of judgment, profanely thought that he was a trifler or a fool.

Here surely is serious matter for our souls to consider. If our religion or profession of Christ have but sprung up under the influence of a family atmosphere, we have warning here to watch and cultivate personal godliness in holy fear of the weakness of such a plant.

But again, if our profession of Christ has not, as with Abram spread an influence in the family, we have great reason to be humbled, and to fear that it is because, like Lot, we have not in our own person the faith in its separating and victorious power.

Lessons of serious and holy importance on the subject of family religion are in that way read to us by this little history. It tells us that we ought to be the means of spreading the knowledge of God; and if we lack in this, there is reason to suspect the moral condition of our soul. The unerring Spirit says, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another"; and as to the family's upbringing it says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in

the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Family religion is thus honored by the Lord, but the thorough and the personal power of it is also assisted. The fathers to the children are to make known the truth (Isa. 38:19), though each one must be born again or he cannot see the kingdom of God.

It is beautiful to see the "unfeigned faith" dwelling in one generation after another of the same family, as in the grandmother Lois, the mother Eunice, and the child Timothy; but it is beautiful also to read in the third of those family generations the tears and the affections which give the full persuasion that their religion is not a mere imitative or educational one-the mere catching of a family influence-but the precious inwrought power of a kingdom which God Himself has set up in the soul.

"Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done." (Psalm 78:3, 4).

A Family Scene: Some Important Lessons

How often we may learn a most valuable lesson from some trifling incident of daily life! We remember once a dear, loving, charming little boy who was in the constant habit of coming to his father's study whenever he wanted anything. If he wanted his pencil sharpened, or a sheet of paper, or a picture book, his little gentle tap was sure to be heard at the study door.

The father always attended to his little boy. Come when or with what he might, he was always sure to find a willing ear and a ready hand. The father acted thus not merely from affection - though there was deep, true, and strong affection - but from principle. He felt that his child should ever find in the parent what he could not find in anyone else; nor could he endure the thought of sternly repulsing the precious little boy, and compelling him to have recourse to hirelings or strangers to meet his little wants. He felt it to be his sweet and sacred duty to attend to his child.

And the father was right. We little know what mischief arises from the habit of leaving children with unconverted people who corrupt their young minds and pollute their imaginations. Many a one has had to groan all his days over the effects of scenes witnessed in childhood through the culpable carelessness and indolence of parents who, instead of seeking to keep their children within the moral shelter of their own presence, left them with others who not only neglected them but took pains to teach them wickedness and folly.

Yes, many a Christian parent has grievously erred and failed in this matter, and that too, very often under the plea of going to meetings, or going out in so-called service. The children have been entirely neglected; and the enemy has taken occasion to make impressions upon their tender, plastic minds to instill corrupt principles and to teach them words and ways of wickedness that adhere to them all their days.

This is very serious, and it claims the attention of all Christian parents. We must remember that, as parents, we have a duty to discharge to our children which cannot possibly be neglected with impunity. Whatever else we neglect, we must not neglect them. We do not refer now to their mere wants, but to their minds, their morals, their immortal souls. Attention to their wants is only a part of the moral training; and it is important that parents should ever show themselves attentive to the real wants of their children, so that they may have no occasion to seek for sympathy or succor elsewhere.

No doubt it will form a part of proper moral training to teach the children not to be inconsiderate or self-occupied, but to think of others, and to find delight in serving others in every possible way. All this is most fully admitted, and is strongly insisted upon; but it leaves wholly untouched the duty of parents to bind their precious children to them by a loving and thoughtful attention to all their little wants, and cares, and sorrows.

But to return to our incident. As we have said, our dear little boy was continually in the habit of coming to his father whenever he wanted anything, and the father was careful not to repulse him, however he might be occupied.

Well, it happened one day that the father was engaged in his study when he heard the well-known tap at the door. "Come in," he said, and the child entered. "Well, my little man, what do you want now?" "Notin', Papa; I only 'ant to be wit'on." And he made his way to a corner of the room and remained quietly alone with his father.

This was a very simple incident indeed, but it taught that father a lesson which he has never forgotten. The lesson is this: do we ever go to our Father when we do not want anything? Do we go to Him simply for the pleasure of being alone with Him? We go to Him with our wants, and we do well. He would have us do so. He invites and exhorts us to go to Him with all our wants, all our cares, and all our sorrows; and He never repulses us - never, no never. He never reproves us for coming too often - never says, "Go away, I cannot attend to you now." He may at times keep us waiting - at times withhold things which we ask because He knows they would be bad for us - but He never sends us away from His dear presence. He loves to have us near Him. He delights to hear us telling out all our needs, all our weakness, all our exercises, into His gracious and ever-open ear.

All this is so, of a truth; hut do we ever go and tell the Lord that we do not want anything but only to be near Him? Do we ever go and lie at His feet in the calm, satisfied condition of one who finds all the deep longings of the soul met in the simple fact of being near Him?

Oh, that it may be so more and more, and then a little of the creature will go a great way with the heart. We shall be very independent of creature streams if we abide near to that ever-gushing Fountain, and not only independent of others, but a channel of blessing ourselves.

The Form of a Servant: Perfection Found, Proved, Read, Known

"The form of a servant" was a reality just as much as "the form of God" in Christ Jesus - as truly an assumed reality as the other was an essential, intrinsic reality. And being such, His ways were those of a servant just as, being the Son, His glories and prerogatives were those of God. He prayed; He continued whole nights in prayer. He lived by faith, the perfect pattern of a believer, as we read of Him, "the leader and completer of faith" (Heb. 12:2, N. Trans.). In sorrow He made God His refuge. In the presence of enemies He committed Himself to Him who judged righteously. He did not His own will, perfect as that will was, but the will of Him who sent Him. In these and in all kindred ways was "the form of a servant" found and proved and read and known to perfection. It is seen to have been a great and living reality. The life of this Servant was the life of faith from beginning to end.

"I will put My trust in Him" may be said to have been the language of the life of Jesus. But His faith was gold, pure gold, nothing but gold. When tried by the furnace, it comes out the same mass as it had gone in, for there was no dross. Saints have commonly to be set to rights by the furnace. Some impatience or selfishness or murmur has to be reduced or silenced, as in Psalms 73 and 77. Job was overcome; trouble touched him and he fainted, though often he had strengthened the weak hands, and upheld by his word them that were falling. "The stoutest are struck off their legs," as an old writer says. Peter sleeps in the garden, and in the judgment hall tells lies, and swears to them; but there has been One in whom the furnace, heated seven times, proved to be precious beyond expression.

Read Luke 22; see this One in that great chapter; see Jesus there in the hour of the trial of faith. He is first in company with the sorrow that was awaiting Him, then with His disciples, then with the Father, and then with His enemies - and mark it all, beloved.

How unutterably perfect all is! this faith in its unalloyed preciousness when tried in the fire! But all the life of Jesus was the life and obedience of faith. In one light of it, it was most surely the life of the Son of God in "the form of a servant" humbling Himself even unto death, though "in the form of God," and though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; but in another, it was the life of faith; "I will put My trust in Him." "I have set the LORD always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." These are His breathings, and we celebrate Him, after our own way, in His life of faith, and sing together of Him -

"Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,

'Mid darkness only light,

Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,

And in His will delight."

And all this precious life of faith was answered by the care and keeping of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The faith of

Him who was serving on earth was perfect, and the answer of Him who dwelt in the heavens was perfect. (Psalm 91)

Not Given but Taken

Gen. 24

When the servant spoke of Isaac to Rebekah, unfolding his beauty, his riches, and the promises of which he was the exclusive heir, she felt an irresistible awakening of her affections, and loved Isaac already in her heart. It was not so much that she was giving her heart to an unseen and unknown Isaac, as that he had taken it. It was thus before I knew Jesus; I felt it hard, impossible, to give Him my heart; but when the Spirit of God opened up the knowledge of Him to my darkened understanding, revealing His beauty, His riches, intimating that all who believe are "joint heirs" with Him in His inheritance, I had no further thought of giving my heart for He had naturally and designedly taken it.

Glorified in His Saints

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints - not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him. And as one much loved and honored in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: "No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air." And his exhortation to me I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): "O my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfillment." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Glory of That Light: Transcendent Beauty

Nothing but the apprehension of Christ Himself - Christ in glory - can detach us from this present scene, or blind us to its beauty and fascination. This is strikingly illustrated in the Apostle's account of his conversion. On his way to Damascus, armed with worldly authority against the saints of God, and filled with bitter enmity against the name of Jesus, "suddenly," he says, "there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." Acts 22:6-11.

A complete revolution has been effected. The one who had been animated by the most deadly hatred, both against Christ and His people, is now transformed into a willing slave. "What shall I do, Lord?" expresses his changed condition, as well as the after attitude of his whole life. Besides this we learn that he could not see for the glory of the light that had flashed upon him; and while this is to be understood as a matter of fact physically, it yet symbolizes the spiritual effect upon the Apostle of the revelation to him of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Trace out Paul's pathway from this moment, and it will be seen that thenceforward he has no eye for anything but Christ - that the vision of his soul is filled with this one blessed, glorious Object. Everything that had hitherto engaged and occupied him, everything to which he had clung, and everything which he had cherished, now lost their attractions, faded into dimness and nothingness before the surpassing beauty and glory of the One who appeared to him when on his way to Damascus. All his precious things were seen to be but wretched tinsel by the side of that which he beheld in a glorified Christ. As he himself tells us, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (have Christ as my gain). Phil. 3:7, 8. The estimate he formed at first was the abiding estimate of his life. Christ was all to him, and he wanted nothing beside.

The history of the Apostle therefore teaches most important lessons. First, as has been said, nothing but Christ Himself can emancipate us from the power of present things. Many a soul is held in helpless bondage from ignorance of this truth. They desire to be freed from the influence and power of this scene, and they groan and struggle in their captivity, sighing for a deliverance that never comes. The reason is that they begin the wrong way. Instead of looking to Christ, and being occupied with Him, they look to themselves, and are occupied with their circumstances. The consequence is that they become more enfeebled and powerless every day.

It is said of the Thessalonians, for example, that they turned to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9). If they had sought to turn themselves from idols to God, they would have remained idolaters until the

day of their death. But looking first to God, who was presented to them in the gospel of His grace in Christ, they were drawn by His mighty power out from under the thralldom of Satan in the worship of false gods.

Levi is another example of the same thing. Sitting at the receipt of custom, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to him with the word, "Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. " Luke 5:27, 28. The attractions of Christ drew him away from all his associations, from all that might naturally have detained him, and constrained him to be, from that day forward, His devoted disciple. This is the secret of all deliverance for the soul. If the eye be but directed to and fastened upon Christ, nothing down here can attract us. There is power in Him to emancipate the most abject and helpless; but the condition of its reception is to be occupied with Him. Whoever would therefore be lifted above his circumstances, and follow Christ in the joyous sense of liberty, must ever maintain the attitude of beholding the glory that is displayed in His unveiled face.

Together with deliverance from the power of this scene, in the way described, there will come another thing; that is, insensibility to its attraction. Saul could not see for the glory of that light. He was blind to all but the beauty of Christ. The light of day extinguishes all lesser lights; and the light of the glory, by the very outshining of its splendors, eclipses and extinguishes the brightest glories of earth. And just as when we have been gazing at the sun, we cannot for a time see clearly the objects of earth, so when we have been beholding the glory of the Lord, our eyes are dimmed for the things of this world. If therefore we are sensible of its fascinations, it is a sure sign that Christ has not been the constant object of our souls; and at the same time, it is a warning to us of the danger of allowing anything to come into competition with Himself.

When Peter, in his forgetfulness on the mount of transfiguration, said to the Lord, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God will have no competitors with His beloved Son; and thus "when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." (Matt, 17:5-9). Christ therefore is out only object, and in gazing at Him we not only have fellowship with the Father, but we also find 'deliverance from the scene, and the attractions of the scene, through which we are passing.

"O fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That, with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see."

God Displayed: in His Works and in His Word

Scripture is always perfect; but men are not competent to speak unless taught of God. Thus, humanly speaking, there are those who could appreciate the wonders of the heavens, but are dull to perceive the divine construction of a daisy; yet to anyone that estimates aright, the perfect hand of God, even in a daisy, is just as clear and certain as in the solar system. It is only a question of the place which each creature of God occupies in His own immense scheme. His wisdom and power are displayed no less in the minute than in the grand, and massive, and sublime. Thus there is no doubt that if the telescope opens many a wonder to man, the microscope is not less impressive. They are both important instruments in the hand of man, and they are both intended, doubtless, in God's providence, to show man from the natural world a witness of divine power in what is above, and also in that which is beneath. But in all things, what ought to be gathered from it is, not incense for man, but the wonders of God in what He has wrought.

A similar principle applies to the Word of God; for therein, if God displays Himself in what is vast, quite as much does He appear in ways whose minuteness might easily escape observation. Everywhere perfection is claimed for God, whether in what He has made, or, above all, in that which He has written; and in that which He has written beyond that which He has wrought, because His mind and ways must transcend His outward works. For the Word of God is claimed the very highest place, as the expression of His wisdom - His inner wisdom. For that which is connected with matter must yield to what has to do with mind and the affections, and above all, the display of the divine nature.

God Gives Sufficient Evidence, but Man Must Receive God's Testimony in Faith

Fully admitting the value of reasoning to convict gainsayers and expose the futility of their captious arguments, I lay it down as an axiom that in revealed truth it is and must be simply a question of a divine testimony which is given to be believed, and which binds the conscience even of him who rejects it through unbelief. If physics require patient induction and comprehensive grouping under general principles or laws, if mathematics demand a strict and necessary demonstration, if the mixed sciences admit of both, the written Word of God claims faith in His testimony which tests the moral state of him who hears....

Again, God does give sufficient evidence to render the unbelief of the objector inexcusable; but the faith which rests on such human motives is merely of nature, not of the Holy Spirit as its source. One may be arrested or attracted by such evidence; but God's testimony must be received because and as He gives it, with no other motive whatever, else we set up to judge Him and His Word instead of submitting, as divinely formed faith always does, to be judged by Him. If the testimony be of God, it is the truth; and if so, he who cavils and opposes it is by that fact proved to be in such a state morally that he has no congeniality with the truth of God....

Revelation is the word of a God who cannot lie; and if man can with comparative ease convey his mind correctly, how much more can God His, infinite though it be? The human element is fully admitted; but the essence of inspiration is that the power of the Holy Spirit excludes error in the writer. It is too much forgotten that there is ignorance in every reader, and that this ignorance as to divine truth is really and always, spite of appearances, in the ratio of our self-sufficiency.

Further, that there are difficulties, not only great but possibly insoluble by you, me, or any other man, is not only allowed but affirmed.... There is no divinely formed province even in nature, and this in its lowest or least forms, where there are not enigmas beyond the wit of man; and these the wisest are the most ready to confess. If writings which professed to be a revelation of God.

God Is Light: the Message

1 John 1:5

The Apostle John had seen Jesus, and had beheld in Him the manifestation of "that eternal life, which was with the Father," and what he had "seen and heard" he declared unto the saints to whom he wrote, that they might have fellowship with him—a fellowship which was "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Nothing could be more blessed than this wondrous association and fellowship into which the saints are brought, and so the Apostle had written them these things that their joy might "be full." All this is the expression of God's infinite grace to poor sinners, whom He has been pleased to lift out of the depths of ruin, and to deliver from the power of sin and Satan, giving them divine, eternal life, and bringing them into His own presence, and establishing them there in a known and eternal relationship with Himself. This is pure, unmingled grace, the fruit of infinite, eternal love, and it is most blessed indeed.

But the human heart in its wretched perversity and wickedness is ever ready to abuse grace, yes, even to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, if it can; and so we find the truth of God guarded on every side. If God in infinite grace takes up vile sinners and brings them into His own presence and into fellowship with Himself, it is cause for profoundest joy and gratitude; but in doing this, God never does, and never can, set aside His own character. His unsullied holiness, His absolute purity, must shine out in all that He does, as well as His love and grace. If "God is love," "God is light" as well. "Light" and "love" are the very essence of what He is in His nature. And if we are made partakers of the divine nature, recipients of that life—that eternal life—which was manifested in Jesus the Son of God here upon earth, we must remember it is the nature of One who is light, absolute purity, necessarily detecting and excluding all evil. Hence the Apostle says, "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

No language could be used to describe more forcibly God's intrinsic and absolute purity. It is a purity that admits of no degree of evil. Not only is God "light," but no "darkness" can mingle with that light. Darkness is necessarily excluded by what He is as light. And if we have been brought to God, we are not "in darkness," but "in the light." It is the place and condition into which we have been brought. We were once darkness, but now light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8).

In our natural state we were "darkness"; now, as redeemed and brought to God, and made partakers of the divine nature, we are "light in the Lord." What a change, both of place and condition! Once afar off, but now in God's presence in Christ, brought nigh through His blood! Once enemies, now reconciled, and in cloudless light, able to look up into God's face and say, Abba, Father! Once incapable of having a common thought, or feeling, or desire with God, now possessed of the divine nature, and able to have fellowship with Him, and with His Son Jesus Christ!

Do we then say we have been brought to God, and have fellowship with Him, and while claiming these things, walk in darkness? Then it is all a "lie," and we "do not the truth."

If we have been brought to God we are in the light, for God is light; and we have been made partakers of the divine nature. God has been revealed in Jesus, and through this revelation we have been brought to Him, receiving the life which was manifested in Jesus. And thus we are brought into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Only as possessing this life can we have fellowship with God.

And if we possess this life, and are in this fellowship, we are necessarily in the light. The light is what God is in the purity and holiness of His nature, and we participate in this 'nature, and thus are in the light. But if we say we participate in this nature, and in it have fellowship with God, while we walk in darkness, we connect darkness with Him who is light. It is to say darkness belongs to that pure and holy nature, that divine life, which was manifested in Jesus. And this is a lie, and we do not know the truth. We are still in the moral darkness of nature, and know not God.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." It is a solemn statement which shows the necessary exclusion of evil from His presence. The cross is the measure of this. There we see His awful abhorrence of sin when He abandons His own Son, and commands the sword to awake against Him as made sin for us. Abandoned of God on that cross, the suffering Victim was overwhelmed in darkness, in unfathomable sorrow, left to drink the cup of God's wrath against sin. That bitter cry of anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" shows the utter impossibility of the darkness mingling with the light, or of sin having a place in the presence of God.

All this is unspeakably solemn if we look at the flesh or the old nature and what flows from it; and yet it is unspeakably blessed when we realize that we are in the Son, and that our life is in Him. We are brought to God in Christ. "As He is, so are we in this world." We are in the light, but it is as partakers of the divine nature, and thus in our nature morally, like God Himself, and this is most blessed indeed. But it searches the heart, and tests our practical state. Are we habitually walking in the fear of God, and judging the flesh with its lusts, so that nothing is seen in our walk or ways but what is Christ-like? Do we carry in our souls, daily and hourly, the sense that we are in God's presence? And do we realize the manner of life that becomes that place? We are in the light; we are in God's presence.

We are not there today and some place else tomorrow. It is the place we are in as Christians. May the power of this truth possess our souls, giving us that holy sobriety of soul, and abhorrence of sin, suited to the place we are in, and the nature and character God has given us as His own children.

God Over All

In other issues we have noticed some of the attacks which Satan has made on the truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; on Him who said of old, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple." Mal. 3:1. Yes, He who came was Jehovah who sent the messenger (John the Baptist); He who came was God "over all." The denial of this precious fact has continued from the earliest days until now.

Another serious evil which has plagued the professing church is the denial of the spotlessness of the humanity of our blessed Lord both in life and in death. The enemy cannot deceive all people with one falsehood so he has others suited to the temperaments of different individuals. Some who may affirm that the Lord Jesus was God, and that from eternity, may be trapped by heretical teachings which sully the perfection and spotlessness of His manhood, but this is equally blasphemous on the one hand and destructive to souls on the other; for if He was not absolutely spotless and pure, He could not be the Savior of sinners. Of necessity the substitute must Himself be without any taint of sin whatsoever or He could not stand in the sinner's stead.

On this point Scripture is definite and precise; it says of Him that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22); and that He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." 1 John 3:5. As one of our poets has said,

"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood."

When God gave instructions to the Israelites regarding the Passover lamb, He told them that their lamb had to be "without blemish"; that is, it was to be free from any blemish in order to be a type of Him who was truly so; and so we read later that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" - without any imperfection or spot of defilement.

1 Pet. 1:19.

Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35.

And even in the types of the Old Testament His spotless and perfect humanity is always carefully guarded; for instance, in the book of Leviticus we have in the first four chapters the four different offerings - the burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering. These present Christ in four different aspects, which we shall not go into here, except to state that the

meat offering presents Christ in His life down here as fully consecrated to God - it is His perfect, spotless life - and the sin offering is the presentation of that blessed One in death bearing the sins of others. Now it is precisely in these two points that the enemy has attacked His personal and "relative" purity - in His pathway here as being absolutely without any taint of sin, and on the cross as the spotless victim bearing the sins of others.

In what is said of these two offerings the Spirit of God has anticipated the enemy's attack and has stated clearly that they are "most holy." It says of the meat offering, "It is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire" (Lev. 2:3); and "This is the law of the meat offering:... It is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering" (Lev. 6:14, 17). While of course the burnt offering and peace offering were most holy also, it is only of the meat offering, and sin and trespass offerings that it is so stated, thus showing the importance the Holy Spirit attaches to the very truths that would come under attack from the enemy.

These vicious attacks have sometimes come from prominent teachers whom Satan has beguiled, and their error has often been wrapped up in a great show of learning and ambiguous statements. B. W. Newton, for one, would say that He was personally holy and yet go on to say that because of His connection with Israel He was relatively sinful. O the daring of that statement! Surely if we had to receive that we would have to say with Mary, "They have taken away my Lord." Neither in Himself, nor in His connection with Adam's race, nor with the nation of Israel, was there any taint of sin whatsoever; He was "most holy."

One of the worst offenders in this heterodox teaching is the Seventh Day Adventist cult. Many people have become ensnared in their evil through reading the literature which is freely offered to the unwary. This literature is most deceptive; the rank attacks on the Person and work of our blessed Lord are obscured in a cloud of talk about the Scriptures themselves. They profess to go by the Word of God, and refer to it freely. They understand nothing of what a Christian is, for they take the place of Jews, and put themselves under the law. Great emphasis is placed on keeping the Sabbath day, but this is only a part of a whole legal entanglement with a past dispensation. It is worse than the Galatian heresy from which we are to stand apart - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. 5:1.

People are apt to think that the Adventists' talk about keeping Saturday - the Sabbath - is the only difference between them and what might be termed orthodox denominations, but their whole system reeks with error. In reality they deny the deity of Christ, but their special attack is on His holy humanity. They openly charge Him with partaking of a sinful nature with evil tendencies. It is hard to understand how any Christian could read these unabashed remarks derogatory to their Savior and not burn their literature forthwith, but many have read, and do read, right over these blasphemous statements without a pause. If this doctrine is true, there is no Savior for lost mankind, and we are yet in our sins.

One thing that conceals their sinful teaching is the habit of quoting from such men, who were sound in the faith, as Martin Luther, D. L. Moody, C. Spurgeon, and many others; but what they quote from such men is immaterial to their false doctrine; it is something that does not happen to touch on vital points; but the mention of these names tends to make simple souls think that such writers endorse the whole of the printed matter in hand. Furthermore, seldom is there any mention

of "Seventh Day Adventists" on their literature, but rather some simple sounding publishing house, and so, many read this poison without realizing its source. This should be a warning to all Christians to beware what they read. Be sure of the authors and the publishers of all material you read. Do not tamper with poison; the most dangerous poison is the one that is not suspected.

There are many other deadly errors in their system, including the soul-sleeping theory, which is also a denial of the truth of God. There is no such thing in Scripture as the sleep of the soul on the event of death, but rather the plainest teachings possible of the bliss of the departed soul and spirit who is "with Christ, which is far better," and of the misery of the lost as found in Luke 16.

This system of error also teaches that the lost will be raised and then annihilated. What shall God do to him who alters what He Himself has said? Scripture is abundantly plain as to the eternity of woe for those who die in their sins, and of the wicked with whom the Lord shall deal when He appears in power and glory.

Who can be the author of such a system but Satan when it attributes one of the most necessary aspects of the work of Christ in atonement to the devil himself? (the scapegoat of Lev. 16).

But surely we can expect anything from a doctrine that begins by denying the perfection in manhood and the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not our desire to occupy Christians with error, but rather to emphasize the truth as to the Person and work of our Lord and Savior, while at the same time to point out the insidious attacks made against Him. May God grant us to be true to Himself and to hold with affection of heart the basic truths of our salvation and of Him who wrought it. Nothing in the whole universe shall ever undermine the Rock on which our faith is built, but tampering with evil will defile us and spoil our joy; and it will damn many souls of the lost who have not sought the truth, but have given an ear to a lie.

All these things remind us of the time that is soon coming when God Himself shall send men a strong delusion to believe a lie, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:10.

What a terrible time for those who now despise God's Son, and salvation through Him and His finished world

God's Principle: Separation, Not Fusion

"Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." Jer. 15:19.

The principle laid down in the foregoing passage is of the deepest possible importance to all who desire to walk with God. It is by no means a popular principle - very far from it. But this does not detract from its value in the judgment of those who are taught of God. In an evil world the popular thing is almost sure to be the wrong thing; and whatever has most of God - most of Christ - most of pure truth - is sure to be most unpopular. This is an axiom in the judgment of faith, inasmuch as Christ and the world are at opposite points of the moral compass.

Now, one of the most popular ideas of the day is fusion, or amalgamation; and all who desire to be accounted men of broad sympathies and liberal sentiments go thoroughly in for this grand object. But we hesitate not to avow that nothing can be more opposed to the revealed mind of God. We make this statement in the full consciousness of its opposition to the universal judgment of Christendom. For this we are quite prepared. Not that we court opposition; but we have long since learned to distrust the judgment of what is called the religious world, because we have so constantly found that judgment to be diametrically opposed to the plainest teaching of Holy Scripture; and it is, we can truly say, our deep and earnest desire to stand with the Word of God, even though it be against everything and everyone; for we are well assured that nothing can abide forever, save that which is based upon the imperishable foundation of Holy Scripture.

What then does Scripture teach on the subject? Is it separation, or fusion? What was the instruction • to Jeremiah in the passage quoted above? Was he told to try and amalgamate with those around him? Was he to seek to mingle the precious with the vile? The very reverse. Jeremiah was taught of God, first of all, to return himself - to stand apart even from those who were the professed people of God, but whose ways were contrary to His mind. And what then? "Then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me."

Here then we have Jeremiah's personal path and position most clearly laid down. He was to return, and take his stand with God in thorough separation from evil. This was his bounden duty, regardless of the thoughts of men, or of his brethren. They might deem and pronounce him narrow, bigoted, exclusive, intolerant, and the like; but with that he had nothing whatever to do. His one grand business was to obey. Separation from evil was the divine rule, not amalgamation with it. The latter might seem to offer a wider field of usefulness, but mere usefulness is not the object of a true servant of Christ, but simple obedience. The business of a servant is to do what he is told, not what he considers is right or good. If this were better understood, it would simplify matters amazingly. If God calls us to separation from evil, and we imagine we can do more good by amalgamation with it, how shall we stand before Him? How shall we meet Him? Will He call that good which resulted from positive disobedience to His Word? Is it not plain that our first, our last, our only duty, is to obey? Assuredly. This is the foundation; yea, it is the sum and substance of all

that can really be called good.

But was there not something for Jeremiah to do in his narrow path and circumscribed position? There was. His practice was defined with all possible clearness. And what was it? "If thou take forth [separate] the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." He was not only to stand and walk in separation himself, but he was to try and separate others also. This might give him the appearance of a proselytizer, or of one whose object was to draw people over to his way of thinking. But here again he had to rise above all the thoughts of men. It was far better, far higher, far more blessed, for Jeremiah to be as God's mouth, than to stand well with his fellows. What are man's thoughts. worth? Just nothing. When his breath goes out of him, in that very hour his thoughts perish. But God's thoughts shall endure forever. If Jeremiah had set about mingling the precious with the vile, he would not have been as, God's mouth; nay, he would have been as the devil's mouth. Separation is God's principle; fusion is Satan's.

It is counted liberal, large-hearted, and charitable to be ready to associate with all sorts of people. Confederacy, association, are the order of the day. The Christian must stand apart from all such things - not because he is better than other people, but because God says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It was not because. Jeremiah was better than his brethren that he had to separate himself, but simply because he was commanded to do so by Him whose Word must ever define the course, govern the conduct, and form the character of His people. And further, we may rest assured it was not in sourness of temper, or severity of spirit, but in profound sorrow of heart and humility of mind that Jeremiah separated himself from those around him. He could weep day and night over the condition of his people; but the necessity of separation was as plain as the word of God could make it. He might tread the path of separation with broken heart and weeping eyes, but tread it he must if he would be as God's mouth. Had he refused to tread it, he would have been making himself to be wiser than God. What though those around him, his brethren and friends, might not be able to understand or appreciate his conduct; with this he had nothing whatever to do. He might refer them to Jehovah for an explanation, but his business was to obey, not to explain or apologize.

Thus it is always. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

It may seem very plausible and very popular to say, "We ought not to judge other people. How can we tell whether people are believers or not? It is not for us to set ourselves up as holier than others. It is charitable to hope the best. If people are sincere, what difference does it make as to creeds? Each one is entitled to hold his own opinions. It is only a matter of views after all."

To all this we reply, God's Word commands Christians to judge, to discern, to discriminate, to come out, to be separate. This being so, all the plausible arguments and reasonings that can possibly be adduced are, in the judgment of a truehearted, single-eyed servant of Christ, lighter by

far than the small dust of the balance.

Hearken to the following weighty words from the blessed Apostle Paul to his son Timothy - words bearing down with unmistakable clearness upon all the Lord's people at this very moment: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these [the dishonorable vessels], he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim. 2:19-21.

Here we see that if any man desires to be a sanctified vessel, meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto, every good work, he must separate himself from the iniquity and the dishonorable vessels around him. There is no getting over this without flinging God's Word overboard; and surely to reject God's Word is to reject Himself. His Word commands me to purge myself, to depart from iniquity, to turn away from those who have only a form of godliness, but deny its power.

God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility

The rendering of 1 Tim. 2:4 ("Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth") in our excellent authorized version, is perfectly correct. Your difficulty arises from your not seeing the immense difference between theology and the heart of God. Theology consists of the conclusions of men's minds drawn from the facts of Scripture; and you may constantly find souls harassed and perplexed by the dogmas of conflicting schools of theology instead of resting, in childlike simplicity, upon the plain statements of the Word of God. In point of fact, what is called the high school of doctrine is right in what it holds, and wrong in what it rejects; and on the other hand, the low school of doctrine is right in what it holds, and wrong in what it rejects. The former holds predestination, election, divine sovereignty, and the eternal security of all true believers; and herein it is right. But it denies the full offer of salvation to all men, and human responsibility; and herein it is wrong. The low school of doctrine holds the freeness and fullness of salvation, and the moral responsibility of the sinner; and herein it is right. But it denies the sovereignty of divine grace and the security of the believer; and herein it is wrong.

You will bear in mind, dear friend, that when we use the terms "high school" and "low school," we do not at all mean to give offense; far from it; we merely speak of things as they are. For ourselves, we desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture, and not by any school of divinity. We are quite sure God never meant to puzzle, to repulse, or to discourage poor souls - no never. God is love; His grace has brought salvation unto all. He wills not the death of a sinner. He wills not "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Such is His gracious aspect toward all; hence, if any perish, it is not in pursuance of the will of God.

But there is another side to this great question. Man is responsible. What mean those touching words of the weeping Savior, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And again, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." Do you not see, dear friend, that Scripture as distinctly teaches divine sovereignty as it teaches human responsibility - and the permanency of salvation as distinctly as its freeness? Are we called upon to reconcile these things? No; they are reconciled by God Himself inasmuch as they are taught in His holy Word; we are only to bow our heads in believing and adoring reverence. It is a great matter to make one's escape from the labyrinths of systematic theology and yield ourselves to the formative power of the whole truth of God. We shall merely add, ere we close this reply, that Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of election, but sedulously excludes the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. It teaches that all who reach heaven will have to thank God for it; and all who find their place in hell will have to blame themselves.

A Goodly Heritage: Pleasant Places

This psalm presents the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of self emptied and absolute dependence. "Preserve Me, O God; for in Thee do I put My trust." This was His attitude from the manger to the cursed tree. He never, for a single instant, ceased to depend on God. His heart never once cherished a creature expectation - an earthly hope.

Hence, He could at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places." They might not be smooth places or sunny places, or places agreeable to flesh and blood; but faith, a confiding heart, a subject will, a dependent spirit, could always say they were "pleasant." He might be misunderstood, misinterpreted, accused of being mad, of having a devil; He might be maligned, despised, rejected, betrayed, denied, deserted, spit upon, buffeted, mocked, cast out - yet in the face of all He could say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Yes; "pleasant" and "goodly" were the words which the blessed Lord used to describe His "lines" and His "heritage," though He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53).

And how was this? Just because God filled the entire range of His vision. His outward circumstances, as looked at from nature's point of view, would not by any means appear to have been either "goodly" or "pleasant." His path was not strewn with roses. It was a desolate, rough, dreary path, so far as earth was concerned. The foxes and the fowls were better off than He. The very beasts of the forests and the fowls of the air had what the Creator of heaven and earth had not. He had not where to lay His head. There was no rest for Him. He could not enjoy many sunny hours in a dark world like this. Earth did not afford Him a single green blade, a single refreshing spring. He was debtor to a poor Samaritan adulteress for a drink of water in His hour of weariness. The women that came up with Him, from the despised Galilee, "ministered unto Him of their substance." This world had naught for the heavenly man, save the manger, the crown of thorns, the vinegar, the gall, the spear, the borrowed grave. Yet notwithstanding all, He could say that His "places" were "pleasant," and His "heritage" was "goodly."

Christian reader, these are the words of your Great Exemplar - of Him who has left you an example that you should follow His steps. So then, do you feel and acknowledge that the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places, and that your heritage is a goodly one? To answer this, you are not to look within or around. Your reply is not to take its shape from the circumstances or the influences, the men or the things, with which you may happen to be surrounded. You must look straight up into heaven, for there, and there alone, properly speaking, are your "lines"; there is your "heritage." Your lines are fallen within the "many mansions" of your Father's house on high; and you have received as your heritage "a kingdom which cannot be moved." You are provided for, forever. You can never want any good thing. Christ is your portion, heaven your home, glory your everlasting destiny. The love that has stooped to pluck you as a brand from the burning, has clothed you with a robe of divine righteousness and will, ere long, crown you and make you a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out forever.

Well, therefore, may you speak of "pleasant places" and "a goodly heritage." True, your path down here may be rough and thorny - you may be tried by ill health, poverty, bereavement, sorrow, pressure, personal infirmity, and various other circumstances - but then remember, your lines are fallen to you in "heavenly places"; your heritage is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and... fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," while at the same time you are "kept by the power of God," in the midst of those very trials, "through faith unto salvation." "The LORD is the portion of Mine inheritance and of My cup: Thou maintainest My lot." This was enough for the heart of Jesus. He needed nothing more. He found His all in God, and there He rested.

Then as to His hope; what was it? "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." In these words are wrapped up one of the most profound and precious truths which can possibly engage our attention; namely, that the body of the Lord Jesus came forth from the tomb, bearing the marks of an accomplished atonement, and yet, without the smell of mortality having passed upon it. The foul breath of corruption never reached His pure, holy, sinless, spotless flesh. This is a vital, fundamental truth - a sublime mystery of our most holy faith. The perfect humanity of the eternal Son of God "tasted death," and yet "saw no corruption." The soul that denies this must be a total stranger to all spiritual communion with the Person of the Son. He has yet to be divinely taught that all-important truth which lies at the very base of the "great... mystery of godliness"; namely, that "God was manifest in the flesh."

Oh! that the Church of God may drink into the spirit, realize the power, and enter into the practical results of this cardinal truth. It is much to be feared that the mysterious Person of the God-man does not occupy the thoughts and command the affections of the saints as He should. There is far too much looseness and inaccuracy both in reference to His Person and His work. Hence, the fearful prevalence of carnality and worldliness.

O Lord, revive Thy work!

The Gospel of Our Salvation: Contrasted With Gospel of Kingdom

The preaching of Jesus announced the kingdom, showed that the time was fulfilled, that the kingdom of God was at hand, that the people must repent and believe the gospel. We should distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the center of both; but there is a great difference between the preaching of a kingdom which is drawing near, and that of an eternal redemption accomplished upon the cross. It is quite possible that the two truths should be announced together. And indeed we find that the Apostle Paul preached the kingdom; but he certainly also proclaimed an eternal redemption accomplished for us on the cross. Christ prophesied of His death, and announced that the Son of man should give His life for the ransom of many; but He could not announce an accomplished redemption during His life. Men ought to have received Him, and not to have put Him to death. Hence His testimony was about the kingdom which was drawing nigh.

This kingdom in its public power has been delayed because Christ has been rejected (see Rev. 11:17); and this delay lasts all the time that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, until the time when He shall arise from the throne of His Father to judge. God has said, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Psalm 110:1.

It is nevertheless true that the kingdom was already come in mystery according to Matt. 13 This goes on during the time that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God; but when God's appointed moment shall come the Lord will arise and set up the kingdom, and with His own power will judge the living, and peace and happiness shall be established on the earth.

We who have received Him, while the world has rejected Him, shall go to meet Him in the air. We shall be forever with the Lord, and shall come with Him in glory when He shall appear before the world, and shall reign with Him; and, what is still far better, we shall be like Him, and always with Him in the Father's house.

The Green Tree and the Dry

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23:31.

The "green tree" in this scripture is Christ Himself, and the "dry" is the Jewish nation. Together with others, the women of Jerusalem followed Jesus on His way to Calvary and, in the natural tenderness of their hearts, they "bewailed and lamented Him." Jesus, turning, bade them weep rather for themselves and for their children on account of the judgment that would soon fall upon the unhappy and guilty city and people (vv. 29, 30), adding, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" That is, if such things - wicked malice, hypocrisy, unrighteous judgment, and a degrading death were visited upon Him who was like a green tree (compare Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:7, 8), what should be done to the people who were as a dry tree, morally dead before God, without fruit or even leaves, and who were now committing their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah? For such a state, symbolized by a dry tree, there remained nothing but the ax and the fire (Compare Matt. 3:10.)

A Letter Guidance: How to Discern the Lord's Will

My dear,

... As to going to, or, I have nothing to advise and only desire that you may have the Lord's mind. And I do not doubt you will get that, if the eye is single; that is, if His glory is the motive.

As to discerning the Lord's mind, it is largely a question of the state of soul. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him. Is the eye single? Do I desire only His will? Am I not blinded through self-interest or self-will in some way?' Do I refer all to the Lord, and wait on Him, to know His will? If so, He will guide. We do not expect any revelation, or anything extraordinary, but He, by laying on the mind, what is pleasing to Him, or by some providential way, will indicate His will. This may be so distinct that it virtually amounts to a certainty in the mind, though we may not be able to prove it to another. The great thing is nearness to the Lord, and a subject mind, with the desire, "Show me Thy way." He sets before us an open door, with something to indicate that we may enter. We see His hand in it, recognize it, and act accordingly.

This is something we have to learn experimentally. It is not easy to teach it to another, because it is not a mere mental or intellectual operation. Some 27 or 28 years ago I passed through a great exercise of soul as to how I could know the Lord's will to go here or go there. I spoke of it to J.N.D. once when I met him at Alton, Illinois. The answer I got was, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." I never forgot it. And I have found since that when I could get no light, there was some cause - something in my state - or something that hindered full communion. Often there has been more or less misgiving as to whether I had His mind; but generally I have found that when any step was taken in His fear, sooner or later it became manifest that He had guided. Sometimes it is "bit and bridle" - some restraint - some hindrance - but this is where mere nature is working, or will, and the eye is not clear. And it is a mercy to be restrained rather than to have our own way. The simple, normal thing is, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psalm 32

God's Word gives us the great principles. God's Spirit forms our hearts in these principles; and the little details fall into line with them. We exercise our judgment; but it is the judgment of a "sound mind"; that is, a mind formed in its workings by the Word of God. Then "I have set the LORD always before Me." This Object forms and governs the motives. It is akin to "the fear of the LORD." He gets His rightful place in the soul, and He forms our thoughts and desires, and we act for Him...

Your-

Guidance in Service

If a person preaches, and sees no results, it may be the Lord exercising his faith and patience, especially if he thinks he has a kind of right to convert everybody. Sometimes a person may have a gift, but he does not go to the right place - goes where the door is shut instead of open. When the Moravian first went out to Greenland, they were there thirteen years without a soul; they were arranging to go away, but thought they would try one year more, and then, as they were reading the account of Christ's sufferings, someone came and listened, and said, "Read those words again," and it resulted in his conversion, the truth burst out, and numbers were brought in. You do have to look for guidance in work; you may be forbidden to preach in Asia, and be sent to Macedonia instead (Acts 16), and if you follow the leading, and go to Macedonia, you will get the working of God directly. Paul says God makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ. He did not distinguish between saints and others, but "God led me about in triumph because I do not know what best to do." Of course, his was not simply evangelical work and gift, but he was an apostle and teacher. If a person is an evangelist, he will be saying, These poor souls are all perishing; he must not blame another laborer, or undertake another's work - he will take up the work before him in love to souls.

Paul had been at Troas before, going down to Ephesus. Originally he had the dream there, and was called over to Macedonia. I do not know if he preached there, but he had been there. He had stayed at Ephesus, and now he was going back.

The only way to obtain guidance in work is by living close to the Lord. We shall not have "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul" now, but the Lord will send by laying it

on one's heart to go, and then that may be by circumstances, or otherwise. I may be led to preach, and find the way opened up by a circumstance of some kind, led by an outward thing, like a horse or a mule that has no understanding. That is what people call providences, but it is a bit or a bridle. To what degree we have the guidance definitely is another question, but there is such a thing as an entrance here, and a dream to go there; of course, there was nothing in the Word of God directly telling me to come to Belfast. In the absence of guidance, do nothing, but be a testimony where you are. "Preach the gospel to every creature" is a general truth, only we get guidance in doing it; an open door is guidance in itself, in a certain sense. If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; and if I do not find my whole body full of light, well, I say to myself, "Your eye is not single"; it is no use to say it is, for it is not. I may find that out as one effect of my doubt.

There may be direct guidance; I cannot call it into question. When it is given, it is not fanaticism. We get right impressions by living with Christ. John did not go and get a place near Christ in order to know His secrets; but he had a place near Christ, and then the secrets were given to him. Only you cannot go properly to Christ, as John, to ask, unless you are living near Him. Only "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." You must live near the Lord or you cannot reckon rightly on being guided. God's mercy may come in at any time, but "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." I should be filled with the knowledge of His will,

and all spiritual understanding.

Have We a Heart for Christ?

It is of the utmost importance in the study of Scripture to distinguish between God's moral government of the world, and the specific hope of the Church. The entire body of the Old Testament prophecy, and much of the New, treats of the former and in so doing presents, I need hardly say, a subject of commanding interest to every Christian.

It is interesting to know what God is doing, and will do, with all the nations of the earth - interesting to read God's thoughts about Tiro, Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem - about Egypt, Assyria, and the land of Israel. In short, the entire range of Old Testament prophecy demands the prayerful attention of every true believer. But, let it be remembered, we do not find therein contained the proper hope of the Church. How could we? If we have not therein the Church's existence directly revealed, how could we have the Church's hope? Impossible.

It is not that the Church cannot find there a rich harvest of divine moral principles which she may most happily and profitably use. She undoubtedly can; but this is quite another thing from finding there her proper existence and specific hope. And yet a large portion of the Old Testament prophecies has been applied to the Church; and this application has involved the whole subject in such mist and confusion that simple minds are scared away from the study, and in neglecting the study of prophecy, they have also neglected that which is quite distinct from prophecy, properly so called, even the hope of the Church, which hope, be it well remembered, is not anything which God is going to do with the nations of the earth, but to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven, to be forever with Him and forever like Him.

Many may say, I have no head for prophecy. Perhaps not, but have you a heart for Christ? Surely, if you love Christ you will love His appearing, though you may have no capacity for prophetic investigation. An affectionate wife may not have a head to enter into her husband's affairs, but she has a heart for her husband's return; she might not be able to understand his ledger and daybook, but she knows his footstep and recognizes his voice. The most unlettered saint, if only he has affection for the Person of the Lord Jesus, can entertain the most intense desire to see Him; and this is the Church's hope.

The Apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." 1 Thess. 1:9, 10. Now evidently those Thessalonian saints could, at the moment of their conversion, have known little if anything of prophecy, or the special subject thereof; and yet they were at that very moment put into the full possession and power of the specific hope of the Church - even the coming of the Son. Thus it is throughout the entire New Testament. There, no doubt, we have prophecy; there too we have God's moral government; but at the same time numberless passages might be adduced in proof of the fact that the common hope of Christians in apostolic times - the simple, unimpeded, and unencumbered hope - was THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM. May the Holy Ghost revive "that blessed hope" in the Church; may He gather in the number of the elect, and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

He Prepared His Heart: Marks of a Faithful Servant

In the book of Ezra the genealogy of Ezra is traced back to Aaron (chapter 7:1-5). He was one therefore entitled to all the rights and privileges of the priesthood (see chapter 2:62); and moreover he was a ready scribe in the law of his God, and thereby qualified to be the instructor of the people in the statutes of Jehovah. (See Lev. 10:8,11; Mal. 2:4-7.) He became a priest by birth and consecration; but he only became "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given," by personal study of the Word. Inherited office therefore, even with the Jews, could not bestow the qualifications for its exercise - these could only come from individual converse with God in the Scriptures for while by virtue of consecration the priest was entitled by grace to minister before God, he could only minister acceptably when all was done in obedience to the Word, and it was impossible that he could teach unless he himself were acquainted with the mind of God. It was neglect of this second part of their office that led to the failure and corruption of the priesthood; for so completely was the Word of God forgotten in the days of Josiah that the finding of a copy of the law in the temple became an epoch in his reign.

It is therefore of surpassing interest - like finding a beautiful flower in the midst of a sandy desert - to discover in Ezra one who, while he cherished his priestly descent, found his joy and strength in the law of his God; and in verse 10 the secret of his attainments is unfolded. He had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it." Let the reader_ ponder this significant and instructive statement - "He had prepared his heart." So the Apostle prayed for the Ephesian believers that the eyes of their heart ("heart" is the right reading) might be enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of His calling, etc., (Eph. 1:18.) Yes, it is to the heart that the revelations of God are made, even as it was to the heart of Mary Magdalene that the Lord manifested Himself at the sepulcher, rather than to the intelligence of His disciples. Nor can we attach too much importance to this truth. Preparation of heart (and this also comes from the Lord) is everything, whether for the study of the Word, for prayer, or for worship. (See 1 Cor. 8:1,3; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:20,23.)

There is yet another thing. If Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, it was first and foremost that he might do it. It was not therefore to increase his knowledge, to add to his reputation as a teacher, but it was that his heart, life, and ways might be formed by it - that his own walk might be the embodiment of the truth, and thus well pleasing to the Lord. Then followed teaching, "and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." This order can never be neglected with impunity, for where teaching does not flow out of a heart that is itself subject to the truth, it is not only powerless to influence others, but it will also harden the heart of the teacher himself. This is the secret of many a failure in the Church of God. The saints are ever and anon startled by the sudden departure from the truth, or by the fall, of those who had occupied the place of teachers; but whenever the state of the heart is overlooked, and the activity of mind is permitted upon divine things, the soul is exposed to some of Satan's most subtle temptations. A true teacher should be able in measure, like Paul, to point to his own example and say, as he did to the Thessalonians, "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." (Also Acts 20.)

It is evident moreover that Ezra was in communion with the mind of God as to His people. His heart was upon them, for we learn that he had sought permission of the king to go up to Jerusalem, and that "the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him." v. 6. What he desired, therefore, was the welfare, the blessing of his people, the people of his God, but being under subjection to the king, he had to obtain his leave; for the Lord will not have us, even for His own service, slight the authority under which we are placed. If, however, the Lord had put the desire to serve Him in the heart of Ezra, He would influence the king to answer His servant's request.

How good it is to leave ourselves in His hands! We are tempted oftentimes to overleap the barriers which man may place in our path, to force open the doors which the hand of God may have closed; but it is for our comfort and strength to remember that the Lord can make His way plain before our face whenever He wills, and that our part is to quietly wait on Him, ready to go forward when He shall speak the word. The recognition of the hand of God upon him was a characteristic of this devoted servant (see v. 9; chapter 8:18, 22, 31, etc.), and it was at once both the source of his patience and of his courage.

The Heart at Rest

It is a wonderful thing to be so satisfied in the Lord's company, that we can be tranquil about everything. You will often find that it is the one of the most anxious temperament who finds most in the Lord when such a one begins to learn Him. I remember when I used to think that I should be happy beyond conception if I were able to say, "I will fear no evil," his "heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. In order to reach this you must find the Lord enough without anything else. We all say that He is enough, but it is quite a different thing to know it practically. You can never prove the worth of any one until you are absolutely dependent on him; and when that One is "greater than Solomon," it is no wonder that when we are shut in to Him there should, like the queen of Sheba, be "no more spirit" in us.

The Holy Scriptures: the All-Sufficiency of Scripture

If any word of ours could deepen in the souls of our readers the unspeakable importance of possessing a written revelation from God, we would be truly thankful. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments - consisting of 66 books, and embracing an endless variety of subjects, the work of about 40 different penmen drawn from all classes of society, from the wisest of monarchs down to the unlettered fishermen of Galilee, composed too at different periods during the progress of 16 centuries, and in some cases in places 1000 miles apart, pervaded by One mind, one plan, and characterized throughout by unity of design - are fully inspired of God, and hence their authority is absolute and unquestionable. The authority of the living God is lodged in these divine and imperishable records. The declaration of Scripture on whatever subject must be accepted as the voice and will of God.

The contempt of man has been poured upon the Scriptures; the power and ingenuity of man have been exerted to their utmost to blot them out of existence; the learning of man has been employed to destroy their divine character; but all has been in vain. Has the accumulated lore of 33 centuries produced one fact contradicting a single statement in the earliest written of all books-the book of Genesis? On the contrary, that venerable document written by Moses on the plains of Moab, in the middle of the fifteenth century before Christ, throws its certain light upon every branch of science and subject to which it refers, and upon every moral question bearing upon man-his present and future.

Fuller light there may be in other portions of the matchless Word of God, but there is as divine certainty in the statements written by Moses, as in the utterances of the Lord Himself (John 5:45-47). Believing most firmly in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures - as they came from the hands of the various penmen employed by the Spirit of God - we utterly reject the thought that Bible statements need to be confirmed by human testimony, or that the sacred page needs light from the scientist. "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Psalm 12:6.

With ever-increasing delight we turn to the sacred volume, every page, and line, and word of which were penned by inspiration of God. In these divine records we have unfolded the history of man from paradise to paradise, from the first transgression to its final judgment in the lake of fire, from the tribunal in the garden (Gen. 3) to the judgment throne of eternity (Rev. 20), from eternity, through all time and its vicissitudes, on to eternity.

What a tangled, twisted web, what a mass of complications, what a crowd of unanswered questions, and a multitude of unsolved problems, does the history of man present! But in the Word of God all is plain, and the mind of man is fully instructed in every theme bearing on his present relation to God, and on those connected with his eternal future. There the true account of creation, the origin and unity of the race and subsequent history, their distribution into nations, their geographical location, their future whether of judgment or blessing, and kindred subjects of universal interest are clearly unfolded; while the yet more perplexing questions of the ancients, as

the existence of sin, the unity and character of God, the ultimate triumph of good; the revelation of heaven, of hell, of eternity, of grace, and of Christ too, are moral questions of supreme moment satisfactorily and divinely answered by Him who alone could sound the depths of man's utter wretchedness and ruin, and yet disclose in love and righteousness His beloved Son as the Savior of the lost. In the divine volume we have the veil lifted from the historic past and the prophetic future, for with God all is one present. The certain light of inspiration is thrown across the whole history of the race, and we are given to weigh actions and motives, origin and destiny, in the light of God and of eternity. What a book! Truly its author is God!

How Do We Treat the Bible?

The important, practical question is, How do we treat the Bible? Do we honor it because it is the Word of God? Are we guided by its counsels? Have we proved its sufficiency? Do we, when we read it, meditate on it, and mix faith with it, and realize the personal enjoyment of its soul-comforting ministrations? Do we habitually rely on the Holy Spirit to enable us to discern, receive, and communicate its precious mysteries? "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." John 3:33.

WHY then do we read the Holy Scriptures? Because they reveal "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," and are written for our learning and comfort. To neglect them, therefore, is very serious. The faithful in all ages have been noted for standing for the authority of the sacred writings. Moreover, they give us divine assurance as to the eternal future, as well as sure guidance for every step of the way.

HOW do we read the Bible? is also a searching question. If we approach the imperishable Word with the thought of our own competency to discern and understand it, then let it not be surprising if we get nothing from it, or fall into the most grievous errors (1 Cor. 2:14). If, on the contrary, the reader, on opening the sacred volume, takes his true place of utter inability to discern the deep things of God, and waits on God to guide and teach him by the Holy Spirit, then he will never be disappointed and, mixing faith with the Word, will find much profit and blessing.

Again, we may remind the Christian reader of the tendency to read certain favorite chapters or books, instead of "all Scripture"; consequently such do not get a grasp of the scope of the written Word, and are always uncertain as to what the sacred volume really contains. We are not now speaking of reading the Scriptures publicly or in the family, but of reading them privately to honor God, to find food and blessing for our souls, as well as intelligence as to how to walk and please God.

WHEN do we read the Word of God? is another important question. With those who have to arise from their beds early, and have much to do, there is often a strong temptation to put off the private reading of the Word of Truth till later on in the day; the consequence is that other things so engage the mind that such either give up reading, or are unable to apply themselves to the study of the Word, and therefore decline in soul. The best things in Israel were devoted to the Lord. Our Lord was found in prayer a great while before day. The manna came down early, and they had to gather it before sunrise; and our Lord said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Now it is manifest that if we are to seek God's things first, having to do with Him and His Word would precede our having to do with earthly things. We hesitate not to say that such as practically rank earthly things before the heavenly occupation of prayer and reading of the Word are not honoring God as they should; and we believe much of the failure, even in God's people, can be traced to their not giving the things of God the first,... the best, place.

It is said that when Dr. Johnson was told that Mr. had imbibed infidel notions as to the Scriptures, he replied, "He never read the Bible." We believe the same may be said of many a busy skeptic in the present day. The misquotations that some of them make, as well as the egregious errors and misapplications of Scripture, leave no doubt as to this; but those who do "search the Scriptures," pray over them for divine guidance and teaching in humility and uprightness before God, learn to say with an ancient prophet, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

And further, those who follow on to know the Lord through meditation in faith on the written Word, the faithful walk, sooner or later discover that the great testimony of the sacred volume from beginning to end is Christ; and those indeed are blessed who have thus learned that "Christ is all." Happy indeed is the reader who can truly say, Christ is all my salvation, all my desire, my life, my righteousness, my peace, my hope. All my springs are in Him. Christ is my refuge, my resource, my strength, my food, my Friend, my power for all fruit bearing. So absolutely is He all to me, that without Him I can do nothing, apart from Him I have nothing, and am nothing! In turning then to the sacred pages, may we never forget that they testify of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God!

The Book of Jasher

The following is an answer to one who inquired about the book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13), and the book of Nathan the prophet (1 Chron. 29:29), and other books mentioned in the Scriptures which are not a part of the sacred volume.

All that we know about the book of Jasher is this, that there was such a book in Hebrew literature. Whether Jasher was the name of the author, or title of the book, is not certain. In various ancient languages the word used means "upright" or "just." In some ancient copies the sentence is omitted from Josh. 10:13. The other books you refer to, such as the book of Nathan the prophet, etc., in the various scriptures, were uninspired books; or if inspired, were only for the then present use, and almost every vestige of these is now lost. The Holy Ghost did not inspire them for the people of God through all ages. There has been much discussion, and little profit, in these matters.

Suppose an absolutely perfect watch were given to a person - one that should go correctly through all time. The different parts have been made to order by many different persons, in different places, and wonderful and diverse machinery used in producing this perfect timekeeper. The owner of that watch would not need to be acquainted with the name, residence, etc., of each person employed by the designer and maker of that watch. Here, in this precious Book, the inspired Word of God, is the most wonderful production ever placed before the eyes of man. It not only unlocks and explains every secret thought of the heart of man - meeting his every spiritual need for time and for eternity -but it is the true and only full revelation of God to man. A great number of persons, in different places and conditions, have been used in producing this marvelous Book of books, every part being as important in its place as the wheels of a watch. God the Holy Ghost alone could have designed and executed this greatest treasure on earth. But this revelation is so wholly of God, that if we knew the minute history of every person employed, and the very day on which he wrote his part, it would not afford the smallest help; it is only (as we are assured you will agree with us) the divine Author that can, and does, enable us to understand and ever enjoy this inestimable treasure, for which we would ever praise God.

Jehovah Manifests His Character: Jewish History

Jewish history is especially the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. To ask, In what does this history concern us? is to say, Of what use is it that I should know what my Father is about to do for my brethren and the manifestation of His character in His acts?

It is evident from the place which the subject occupies in His Word that their affairs are very dear to our God and Father, if they be not to us. It is in this people, by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we shall ourselves learn to know Him.

The same person may be king of a country, and father of a family; and this is the difference between God's actings toward us and the Jews. Toward the Church it is the character of Father; toward the Jews it is the character of Jehovah, the King. His faithfulness, unchangeableness, His almighty power, His government of the whole earth - all this is revealed in His relationship toward Israel. It is in this way that the history of the people lets us into the character of Jehovah.

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,... then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them." Psalm 126:1, 2.

See on the same subject, Eze. 39:6, 7, 28: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let them pollute My holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD [Jehovah], the Holy One in Israel.... Then shall they know that I am the LORD [Jehovah] their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there." This is the way in which Jehovah reveals Himself. The Father reveals Himself to our souls by the gospel, by the spirit of adoption; but Jehovah makes Himself known by His judgments - by the exercise of His power on the earth.

I have said that the Father reveals Himself by the gospel, because the gospel is a system of pure grace - a system which teaches us to act toward others on the principle of pure grace, as we have been acted on by the Father. It is not "eye for eye, tooth for tooth"; it is not what justice requires, the law of retaliation, or equity, but a principle according to which I ought to be perfect, as my Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). But it will not be mere grace that is suffering evil and doing good in the government of Jehovah.

Jehovah, without doubt, will bless the nations; but the character of His kingdom is that "judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psalm 94:15). At the first coming of Jesus Christ, judgment was with Pilate, and righteousness with Jesus; but when Jesus shall return, judgment shall be united to righteousness. The people of Christ now, the children of God, ought to follow the example of the Savior; that is, not expect or wish that judgment should be in the rigor of righteousness, but they should be gentle and humble in the midst of all the wrongs which they suffer on the part of man. United to Christ, they are indemnified for all their wrongs in the strength of His intimate love which

comforts them by the consolations of the presence of His Spirit and, more than this, by the hopes of the heavenly glory. On the other hand, Jehovah will console His people by the direct acting of His righteousness in their favor (see Psalm 65:5), and by reestablishing them in earthly glory.

The Jews then are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The Church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.

The Same Jesus Christ: Yesterday, and Today, and Forever

If we, beloved, did but value what we have in Christ, if we but took account of our condition in relation to the Lord, and not in relation to circumstances, we should always be happy beyond expression - our joy would be full. But it is in that point we fail. We love circumstances; we live in the power of them too much, in the light of the Lord's favor too little, and we are dull, and low, and half-hearted. Were it not so with us, the journeys in company with the cloud, checkered as they are, would find us and leave us still a happy people. For it is one Jesus throughout, whether it be the day of the blood (Exod. 12), of the song (Exod. 15), or of the cloud (Exod. 13); one and the same Jesus who was with us in the circumstances of human life, in the dying love on the cross, in the life of intercession in heaven, and who will give us His unchanged self in glory forever.

Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resigned,
No changes of season or place,
Would make any change in my mind.
While blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

Jesus: Prophet, Priest, and King

In Luke 10:39, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word, owning Him as the Prophet - the One who had come from the Father's bosom to reveal the Father.

In John 11:32, 33, Mary in her sorrow falls at Jesus' feet and weeps, and He weeps with her. Here she owns Him as her High Priest, and found He was one who could be touched with a feeling of her infirmities, and came boldly to Him who was full of grace and truth, for the grace and help she needed.

In John 12:3, Mary anointed His feet, "and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Sweet and diffused as its fragrance was, it was not so sweet as her faith was to the heart of her Lord. So precious was it in His esteem, that He declared its fragrance should be known wherever His gospel came.

Matt. 26:12, 13 - "She did it for My burial." Her faith understood what even the disciples could not understand. She saw Him slain, as the Lamb, for the sins of the people; and looking (I believe) beyond His death and burial to His resurrection, in verse 7 she anoints Him as king in Zion, the character in which we find Him immediately after entering Jerusalem, exhibiting in weakness what He will hereafter accomplish in resurrection power and glory.

May our faith recognize our earth-rejected and despised Lord in all these, His precious offices: sitting at His feet to learn; weeping at His feet, in the assurance of His sympathy in all our sorrow; and looking forward with joy to that time when He shall be manifested as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and we shall reign with Him in glory.

Joy in God

How much I charge myself for want of joy in God; and I have just come from looking at a scripture that may be able to fix this charge still more home upon the spirit; I mean the opening of Luke. What joy among the angels there; what joy on earth in the vessels filled by the Spirit there! Indeed the one feature of the kingdom of God is "joy in the Holy Ghost." The angels appear together, or alone, as in the person of Gabriel. Witness that fervency of heart and openness of mouth which speaks eloquently the liberty and gladness of the soul. And the style of the filled vessels, whether it be Mary or Elizabeth, Zacharias or Simeon, or the company of shepherds who had been called into the fellowship of angels, equally tells us that all were satisfied; that if in heaven, so on earth, the presence of the power of "the kingdom of God" was expressing itself in joy.

But let us come on to the fifth chapter, and there we shall find that not only angelic heavenly hosts and filled human vessels enter and his companions, at the healed palsied man, at Levi, and then at all the children of the bridechamber. Peter and his companions are at once able to rise up, leave all, and follow Jesus. The palsied man takes up his bed, and rising up, before them all who stood around him, goes home glorifying God. Levi, at the word of power, abandons what is everything to him in this world, and makes a feast, and such a feast that exposed him to the rebuke of others.

The children of the bridechamber could not fast; they were afresh introduced to the Person in whom the fullness of joy dwells and reigns, and they could not fast; and the Bridegroom approves their joy.

Thus were poor believing sinners, as in Acts 13, "filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." They take their place with angels and with filled vessels just to prove (it may be each in his different way) that the one feature of the kingdom of God is "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The poor cripple, carrying his bed with praises, is as sure and seasonable an expression of this as the angelic chorus over the fields of Bethlehem. Levi's feast tells this as distinctly as Mary's song or Simeon's oracle. All is joy after its own order and in its own way.

And this is the crowning, eternal thing: there is peace, there is entrance into grace or favor, there is hope, but the crowning experience in the praises of the soul is joy- "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:11.

Labor and Rest

"The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately." Mark 6:30:32.

There is a word of great sweetness and comfort in these verses. We are introduced to a scene of real labor and toil. The Lord had called the twelve and sent them out two by two without anything for their journey save a staff. They went forth without scrip or bread or money; they preached, they cast out devils, they raised the sick; it was a time of diligent service and incessant toil, but a time of labor which resulted in fruit. After this we find the apostles returning, gathering themselves together, and rehearsing to their blessed Master all they had done and taught.

He had sent them forth, as it were, empty-handed and destitute of all man's resources, and now they have returned and are spreading at His blessed feet their acquired treasures, the fruit of their work and toil; He, with all that tender grace and kindness which were ever His own, accepts it all and, in the divine and blessed love which ever sought the good of His own, He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." Let us note it well. He does not say, "Go and rest," but "Come and rest." Ah! it is not the desert place that could furnish the rest; if so, it might have been "Go," but it is Himself there -there where no distraction can intrude, no surge of worry, no blast Of care can for a moment enter. Oh! how blessed His company in that sweet retreat, made so by Himself alone! How well may we sing of that -

"No soil of nature's evil,

No touch of man's rude hand

Shall e'er disturb around us

That bright and happy land.

The charms that woo our senses

Shall be as pure, as fair,

For all while stealing o'er us

Shall tell of Jesus there."

But there is a further precious thought here. Our own Master and Lord knows the snare of active service, even for Him - the danger of giving it that place which alone belongs to Himself - the temptation to His poor weak child and vessel to be more absorbed with it than with Him; hence, how often do we hear Him say, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." We are told that "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

In this busy day of ours, with its confessed and crying needs on every hand, how true the picture before us is; yet, while recognizing fully our clear, distinct duty to the Church and the world, and not in any wise seeking to clothe our indifference or selfishness with a religious sanctimonious garb, let all who love His blessed service, which is indeed perfect freedom, bear in mind the lesson of our passage, which is plainly this: that the quality of our work will be poor and attenuated indeed, if it be not connected with Christ, from Christ, for Christ. Those who really and truly work for Him must first of all be sustained and fed by Himself, as they hear Him say, "Come... and rest." And oh! how gracious of Him to take His poor wearied worker by the hand, as it were, aside, apart in a desert place with Himself, shutting him out from all but Himself, that with mind undisturbed and heart undistracted, all may be gone over with Himself, in rest and quietness, and fresh thoughts of Himself and His love thus impressed upon the heart, producing renewed vigor and energy for further service for Him.

After this we have recorded a delightful instance of the deep compassion of that heart which was ever touched by distress and need. We are told the people "outwent them, and came together unto Him." Oh, how He did attract the weary and wanting ones! How He also met, and taught, and filled them! How He made the desert place to yield bread enough and to spare and then, having finished all in His compassionate tenderness and goodness, He Himself departed into a mountain to pray; His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

But we must bring these thoughts to a close by a glance at the end of the chapter. In the departure of Jesus into the mountain, we are shown in figure His taking His place of intercession on high. His disciples cross the water in a boat, and we have their vicissitudes; it is such a comfort to think of what is said here, "He saw them toiling in rowing." Not the shades of night, nor the earnest vigil which He kept in prayer on the mountaintop, nor the storm-lashed lake that they were crossing could hide His poor servants from the Master's eyes. Then He who "saw them" came to them in the darkest part of the night, walking on the water in supreme majesty, but in love, and spoke such words of comfort, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

"In darkest shades, if He appear,

My morning is begun."

Lastly, observe it is said, "He talked with them." How blessed the rest of that intercourse after all the toil and labor.

Let This Mind Be in You

Where Christ is presented in His own perfectness all our thoughts are inadequate. The excellency of the Lord surpasses all our thoughts. He is sufficient to be the Father's delight; surely He ought to be ours.

But it is of importance that our hearts should be occupied with Him, and this in His low estate. He is at the right hand of God now. We should look at Him in glory that we may be changed into the same image; but when we look to be the same mind as Christ, we must look at Him down here. Thus in Phil. 2, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" - when was that? When He, who being in the form of God in all the glory up there thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; then, when He was a man, found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are the two steps, as it were, as He is descending: first when being in the form of God He came down to be a man; and then when He who so humbled Himself became obedient unto the death of the cross.

Let Us Not Sleep but Let Us Watch: Drowsiness in Others May Affect Us

It is no uncommon weakness in the child of God that the non-reception of the truth by others leads him to question it. Aroused to the apprehension of the coming of the Lord, he is chilled by the torpor and indifference of those about him. This sensibility to external impression may arise because walking too little in the power of individual communion. The Spirit's witness through the Word is the fullest persuasion; and we depart from His guidance when the heart asks for collateral testimony. But the Word of God has obvious teaching in this respect. "All Scripture is given by inspiration."

The antediluvian world was heedless of the preaching of Noah. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." So in Sodom, when Lot went out and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, "Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."

Gen. 19:14.

Indifference to the testimony of God and the warnings of His Word, betokens the proximity of judgment. We who believe in the speedy advent of our Lord will do Well to take heed that nothing from without, or even from within, distract the attention from the solemn cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." The warning brought many into active service, and drew them outside the camp, bearing the reproach. The Word reached their consciences. They sought to be prepared. But fellowship has its snares as well as its blessings. Much of joy, and no little of danger. Individual energy may give rise to corporate fellowship; but the latter may decline into individual apathy. Association may deaden, as well as revive.

The position which God gave to many of His people in our day, was taken when escaping from a chaos of confusion. They had light, and a measure of faith, and this insured a blessing. Sympathy of soul with others about the Lord (unless the eye is kept single) may degenerate into sympathy with one another, and unity occupy the soul instead of the object of union; and thus individuality be crushed for a season, and the torpor of others affect ourselves. But "The word of God is quick and powerful." Blessed that it is so!

The return of the Lord was to be the hope of the Church. The measure of faithfulness in testimony depended upon the brightness of this hope; His love brought Him into the world, where He was set at naught and crucified. His people are given Him out of the world, left here to witness of the grace which was ready to pardon the vilest sinner, but also of certain judgment on the impenitent. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.

The coming of the Lord will surprise the world, as the flood did its inhabitants in the days of

Noah, or the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot. It will be as unlooked for as the change from the banquet in the palace of Babylon to the midnight slaughter of Belshazzar, and the transfer of the kingdom to Darius the Mede. (Dan. 5.) And this judgment will take place when the iniquity is at its height. Repeated testimonies are being superciliously disregarded. The cry, Behold He cometh, the subject of merriment! "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet. 3:3, 4. And Jude declares, that there shall be mockers in the last time (v. 18). Let not then the non-reception of the truth by others lead us to doubt it, but the rather, seeing Scripture speaks of the coming of Christ surprising a careless, professing people and a guilty world, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. 5:6. W.

A Letter to a Dying Sceptic

My Dear Friend: Pardon, I pray you, the liberty taken by an entire stranger in thus addressing you. I have heard you are ill, about to die, and yet in a state of unbelief; and I write to send you this message: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

Now my dear friend, these are the simple, yet true statements of the Word of God. My desire in writing to you is that you may hear and believe these statements, and live. Life, eternal life, is before you. It is the gift of God, not to those who think they are worthy, but to those who, confessing their unworthiness, look to Christ as a Savior. I need not tell you that you are a sinner; your own conscience will tell you that. The Word of God says plainly, "There is none righteous," "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3. But the Word of God says just as plainly that Christ is set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, and that God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. God justifies the ungodly through faith in Christ.

Do not, my dear friend, call this a fable. It is the very Word of God. I know Scripture says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"; but I hope you do not say this. And if you do not, like the fool, say "There is no God," why should you not believe His Word? If you or I (poor worms of the dust) are able to communicate what is in our minds, why should not God be able to do the same? He has done so, blessed be His name forever and ever! He has spoken in no uncertain terms. He has revealed Himself in the Person of His beloved Son, and spoken to us through His Word, unfolding a plan of salvation which never could have originated in the mind of sinful man. Love, infinite love, to those that were enemies lies at the foundation of this whole plan. But the cross, the blood-shedding of Jesus, was necessary in order that that love might flow out fully and righteously toward the guilty. We had no righteousness and no sacrifice; but God in infinite love has furnished the sacrifice that was needed. He gave His Son, gave Him up to the death of the cross, and this, that you and I might live. Oh! will you receive the gift of God? Will you believe in Jesus? In view of that eternity that lies before you, I pray you, do not turn away from Him who would speak to you through His Word, and who would draw you by cords of love, and reconcile you to Himself though the death of Christ. Oh! let your heart respond to the love of God. There is no love like His! No poetic fancy ever dreamed of such love, nor is it to be found - nor even the thought - in the writings of any heathen philosopher. God has revealed it in revealing Himself in the Person of Jesus. Otherwise such love could never have been known or conceived of. "God is love," and this shown out in Christ Jesus. Oh! let me intreat you, ere you pass into eternity, not to reject the love of God. Believe in Jesus. Believe and live.

I know not whether this letter may not be too late to reach you on this side eternity; but if not too late, I entreat you by the compassions of God, and by the cross and sufferings of Jesus, not to turn

a deaf ear to His messages of love and grace. I write with the one desire that your soul may be saved, and that you may give glory to God in bowing to His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

With earnest desire for your eternal well-being, I am your friend and well-wisher.

Love Directs Itself to Its Object

The disciples indeed had their joy in Christ while as yet He was down here; but when they saw Him ascend, He drew their spirit after Him - as the needle always points to the north, so love directs itself to its object. We set our minds on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and where, together with Him, we are partakers of the heavenly calling. When the Lord passed forty days on the earth after His resurrection, the disciples were doubtless often agitated and unsettled, not knowing what He would do; but when He led them out to Bethany, and they saw Him ascending to where He now is - to the presence of the Father - the scene of their joy was plainly in heaven. Knowing what had occurred, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." What was the secret of their joy? Was it in anything on earth? No indeed. So now with each one of us.

"The path where our Savior has gone,
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne,
And His strength shall be ours on the road."

The Love of Jesus: Four Actings of Love

In looking at Rev. 1:5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love thinks of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regulates itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised, or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself-a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare.

Second, love visits its object. It could not be content with merely thinking-the same 'principle that leads love to think with pleasure, induces it to visit its object; and moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation, and disinterestedness, in the visit as in the thought. It does not think upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of anyone; neither does it visit in order to effect such ends; it has its own real substantial enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting its object.

Third, love suffers for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely thinking of or visiting its object- it must suffer. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because it will express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No; it simply contemplates its object in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

Fourth, love exalts its object. This is the highest point. In the exaltation of its object, love sees the point of previous thought, visitation, and suffering. Hence, love feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing it reaps the wished-for harvest.

Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love, to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved Church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly; His gracious eye surveyed us ere stars were seen above." Did He rest satisfied with merely thinking about us? No; He laid aside all His glory; He came down into this cold heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this "rough valley" of ours, which had "neither been eared nor sown." "The dayspring from on high hath visited us"; but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and degradation; He determined to suffer for us, to die for us-He has washed us in His own blood," which marks the intensity of His suffering for us. What then was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hours of profound darkness, together with the cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"-that the love of Jesus might exalt its object. And He has exalted His object to the highest point of elevation: He hath made us kings and priests unto God."

Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus thought of, visited, suffered for, and exalted its object; this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, we too will often like to think of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfections; moreover we will pay frequent visits to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand and

"altogether lovely." Again, we shall be ready to suffer for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed Person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to exalt Him in every place; our constant cry will be, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of divine love in our poor, cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the mere spirit of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for the Lord Jesus-that affection which has its primary joy in pondering over its object, ere it comes forth as an actor or a sufferer in His cause.

"Come, saints, praise the Lamb, His mercies proclaim, And lift up your heads and sing of His name,

His love to the Church, which He purchased with blood, To make her His bride and the temple of God."

The Closing Scenes of Malachi and Jude: a Comparison of Last Days

In comparing these two inspired writings, we find many points of similarity and many points of contrast. Both the prophet and Apostle portray scenes of ruin, corruption, and apostasy. The former is occupied with the ruin of Judaism, the latter with the ruin of Christendom. The prophet Malachi, in his very opening sentences, gives with uncommon vividness the source of Israel's blessing and the secret of their fall. "I have loved you, saith the LORD." Here was the grand source of all their blessedness, all their glory, all their dignity. Jehovah's love accounts for all the bright glory of Israel's past, and all the brighter glories of Israel's future. While, on the other hand, their bold and infidel challenge, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" accounts for the deepest depths of Israel's present degradation. To put such a question, after all that Jehovah had done for them from the days of Moses to the days of Solomon, proved a condition of heart insensible to the very last degree.

Those who with the marvelous history of Jehovah's actings before their eyes, could say, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" were beyond the reach of all moral appeal. Hence, therefore, we need not be surprised at the prophet's burning words. We are prepared for such sentences as the following: "If then I be a father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a master, where is My fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise My name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy name?" There was the most thorough insensibility both as to the Lord's love, and as to their own evil ways. There was the hardness of heart that could say, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" and, "Wherein have we wronged Thee? And all this with the history of a thousand years before their eyes - a history overlapped by the unexampled grace, mercy, and patience of God - a history stained from first to last with the record of their unfaithfulness, folly, and sin.

But let us hearken to the prophet's further utterances, or rather to the touching remonstrance's of the aggrieved and offended God of Israel. "Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, 'Wherein have we polluted Thee?'

In that ye say, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?' saith the LORD of hosts... Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for naught. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen, said the LORD of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, 'The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even His meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand?' saith the LORD."

Here then we have a sad and dreary picture of Israel's moral condition. The public worship of God had fallen into utter contempt. His altar was insulted; His service despised. As to the priests, it was a mere question of filthy lucre; and as to the people, the whole thing had become a perfect weariness - an empty formality - a dull and heartless routine. There was no heart for God. There was plenty of heart for gain. Any sacrifice, however maimed and torn, was deemed good enough for the altar of God. And if a door was to be opened, or a fire kindled, it must be paid for. Such was the lamentable condition of things in the days of Malachi.

But, thanks and praise be to God, there is another side of the picture. There were some rare and lovely exceptions to the gloomy rule - some striking and beautiful forms standing out in relief from the dark background. It is truly refreshing to read such words as these: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name."

How precious is this brief record! How delightful to contemplate this remnant in the midst of the moral ruin! There is no pretension or assumption, no attempt to set up anything, no effort to reconstruct the fallen economy, no affected display of power. There is felt weakness, and looking to Jehovah; and this be it observed and ever remembered - is the true secret of all real power. We need never be afraid of conscious weakness. It is affected strength we need to dread and shrink from. "When I am weak, then am I strong" is ever the rule for the people of God - a blessed rule, most surely. God is to be counted upon always; and we may lay it down as a great root principle that, no matter what may be the actual state of the professing body, individual faith can enjoy communion with God according to the very highest truth of the dispensation.

Thus it was, as we may see, in the closing scenes of Malachi. All was in hopeless ruin; but that did not hinder those who loved and feared the Lord getting together to speak about Him and to muse upon His precious name. True, that feeble remnant was not like the great congregation which assembled in the days of Solomon, from Dan to Beersheba; but it had a glory peculiar to itself. It had the divine presence in a way no less marvelous though not so striking. We are not told of any "book of remembrance" in the days of Solomon. We are not told of Jehovah's hearkening and hearing. Perhaps it may be said, There was no need. Be it so; but that does not dim the luster of the grace that shone upon the little band in the days of Malachi. We may boldly affirm that Jehovah's heart was as refreshed by the loving breathings of that little band as by the splendid sacrifice in the day of Solomon's dedication. Their love shines out all the brighter in contrast with the heartless formalism of the professing body, and the venal corruption of the priests.

"And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble:... But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts."

We shall now give a hasty glance at the epistle of Jude. Here we have a still more appalling picture of apostasy and corruption. It is a familiar saying that the corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption; and hence it is that the Apostle Jude spreads before us a page so very much darker and more awful than that presented by the prophet Malachi. It is the record of man's utter failure and ruin under the very highest and richest privileges which could be conferred upon him.

In the opening of his solemn address, the Apostle lets us know that it was laid upon his heart to write unto us "of the common salvation." This would have been his far more delightful task. But he felt it "needful" to turn from this more congenial work in order to fortify our souls against the rising tide of error and evil which threatened the very foundations of Christianity. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." All that was vital and fundamental was at stake. It was a question of earnestly contending for the faith itself. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is far worse than anything we have in Malachi. There it was a question of the law, as we read, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." But in Jude it is not a question of forgetting the law, but of actually turning into lasciviousness the pure and precious grace of God, and denying the lordship of Christ. Hence, therefore, instead of dwelling upon the salvation of God, the Apostle seeks to fortify us against the wickedness and lawlessness of men. "I will therefore," he says, "put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out

of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

All this is most solemn, but we desire to present to the reader the charming picture of the Christian remnant given in the closing lines of this most searching scripture. As in Malachi we have a devoted band of Jewish worshipers who loved and feared the Lord and took sweet counsel together, so in the epistle of Jude, amid the more appalling ruins of Christian profession, the Holy Ghost introduces to our notice a company whom He addresses as "Beloved." These are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." These He solemnly warns against the varied forms of error and evil which were already beginning to make their appearance, but have since assumed such awfully formidable proportions. To these He turns with the most exquisite grace and addresses the following exhortation: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Here then we have divine security against all the dark and terrible forms of apostasy - "the way of Cain,... the error of Balaam,... the gainsaying of Core" - "murmurers" and "complainers" - the "great swelling words" - the "raging waves" - the "wandering stars" - "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." The "beloved" are to build themselves up on their "most holy faith."

Let the reader note this. There is not a syllable here about an order of men to succeed the apostles not a word about gifted men of any sort. It is well to see this and to bear it ever in mind. We hear a great deal of our lack of gift and power, and of our not having pastors and teachers. How could we expect to have such gift and power? Do we deserve them? Alas! we have failed, and sinned, and come short. Let us own this and cast ourselves upon the living God who never fails a trusting heart.

Look at Paul's touching address to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20. To whom does he there commend us, in view of the passing away of apostolic ministry? Is there a word about successors to the apostles? Not one, unless indeed it be the "grievous wolves" of which he speaks, or those men who were to arise in the very bosom of the Church, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. What then is the resource of the faithful? "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

What a precious resource! To God Himself and the word of His grace. And hence it follows that, let our weakness be ever so great, we have God to look to and to lean upon. He never fails those who trust Him; and there is no limit whatsoever to the blessing which our souls may taste if only we look to God in humility of mind and childlike confidence.

Here lies the secret of all true blessedness and spiritual power - humility of mind and simple confidence. There must, on the one hand, be no assumption of power; and on the other we must not, in the unbelief of our hearts, limit the goodness and faithfulness of our God. He can and does bestow gifts for the edification of His people. He would bestow much more if we were not so ready to manage for ourselves.

But it is precisely in this very thing we so signally fail. We try to hide our weakness instead of owning it. We seek to cover our nakedness by a drapery of our own providing instead of confiding simply and entirely in Christ for all we need. We grow weary of the attitude of humble, patient waiting, and we are in haste to put on an appearance of strength This is our folly and our grievous loss. If we could only be induced to believe it, our real strength is to know our weakness and cling to Christ in artless faith from day to day.

It is to this most excellent way that the Apostle Jude exhorts the Christian remnant in his closing lines. "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." These words evidently set forth the responsibility of all true Christians to be found together instead of being divided and scattered. We are to help one another in love according to the measure of grace bestowed and the nature of the gift communicated. It is a mutual thing - "building up yourselves." It is not looking to an order of men, nor complaining of our lack of gifts, but simply doing

each what we can to promote the common blessing and profit of all.

The reader will notice the four things which we are exhorted to do; namely, "building" - "praying" - "keeping" - "looking." What blessed work is here! Yes, and it is work for all. There is not one true Christian on the face of the earth who cannot fulfill any or all of these branches of ministry; indeed every one is responsible to do so. We can build ourselves up on our most holy faith; we can pray in the Holy Ghost; we can keep ourselves in the love of God; and, while doing these things, we can look out for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, it may be asked, "Who are the 'beloved'? to whom does the term apply?" Our answer is, "To whomsoever it may concern." Let us see to it that we are on the ground of those to whom the precious title applies. It is not assuming the title, but occupying the true moral ground. It is not empty profession, but real possession. It is not affecting the name, but being the thing.

Nor does the responsibility of the Christian remnant end here. It is not merely of themselves they have to think. They are to cast a loving look and stretch forth a helping hand beyond the circumference of their own circle. "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Who are the "some"? and who are the "others"? Is there not the same beautiful undefinedness about these as there is about the "beloved"? These latter will be at no loss to find out the former. There are precious souls scattered up and down amid the appalling ruins of Christendom, "some" of them to be looked upon with tender compassion, "others" to be saved with godly fear, lest the "beloved" should become involved in the defilement.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that, in order to pluck people out of the fire, we must go into the fire ourselves. This would never do. The best way to deliver people from an evil position is to be thoroughly out of that position myself. How can I best pull a man out of a morass? Surely not by going into the morass, but by standing on firm ground and from thence lending him a helping hand. I cannot pull a man out of anything unless I am out myself. If we want to help the people of God who are mixed up with the surrounding ruin, the first thing for ourselves is to be in thorough and decided separation; and the next thing is to have our hearts brimful and flowing over with tender and fervent love to all who bear the precious name of Jesus.

Here we must close, and in doing so we shall quote for the reader that blessed doxology with which the Apostle sums up his solemn and weighty address. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." We have a great deal about "falling" in this epistle - Israel falling, angels falling, cities falling. But blessed be God, there is One who is able to keep us from falling, and it is to His holy keeping we are committed.

Man Proposes — God Disposes

In these days of busy efforts of men to bring some tranquility to a disordered and disquieted world we are apt to forget the words of Scripture: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Pro. 19:21.

In the end it will be found out that while men were responsible for their acts they were but carrying out the purposes of Him who said: "I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Isa. 46:9, 10.

The account of the recent meeting of the military strategists of the Atlantic Pact Nations to develop a unified defense plan for Western Europe might well have been a page out of history. One of their major problems - whether to defend the West on the line of the Elbe or the Rhine rivers - was reminiscent of a similar one in the days of the old Roman Empire. Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, faced that question back in the year 16 B. C. Marcus Lollius the legate commanding the defenses on the Rhine was defeated by invaders at that time; thereupon Augustus entrusted to his stepson Drusus the task of advancing the Roman frontier from the Rhine to the Elbe but he died on his way back, in 9 B. C. Then the emperor's other stepson Tiberius was sent to complete the work.

The difficult task of bringing the tribes between the Rhine and the Elbe under Roman rule was completed in A. D. 5 when the troops reached the Elbe, and a fleet arrived at its mouth and sailed part way up. But the problem of the territory between those rivers remained, for in a few years Varus and his legions were defeated there. Again Tiberius was dispatched to the area, but devoted himself mostly to strengthening the defenses along the Rhine. By the year A. D. 17 a defensive policy was adopted embracing the Rhine and Danube rivers. Eight legions were placed on each to guard against further incursions from the north and east.

Today the descendants of those people face the same problem of saving Western and Southern Europe from an invader across the Elbe River, and the question remains, Can the territory between the rivers be secured? Surely history repeats itself.

Does not all this that is taking place awaken within us a consciousness of God's wisdom and directing power? For years the children of God who in the fear of God searched out prophecy saw that the Roman Empire was to be revived, with ten kingdoms under a federal head (Dan. 2:41,43; 7:24, 25), but this seemed remote. Germany was a powerful nation, with the balance of power in favor of Great Britain, while Russia was large but comparatively weak. Today all has changed: Germany is divided into two parts, and Russia is threatening from the north and east; the peoples of the old Roman Empire face the problem of how to defend the same old boundaries against greater odds.

As we have pointed out before, only the dire necessity of self-preservation could make the distinctly nationalistic countries of Western Europe willing to adopt a plan that would call for any

sacrifice of their own sovereignty. But Russia's strength, and evident designs for world conquest, have made great changes in Western thinking in four short years.

Economic conditions in the various Western Nations are also having a part in bringing them closer together. There is a real necessity of breaking down trade barriers and of integrating commerce, finance, and military establishments. All this is but preparing the way for the appointment of a head for ten countries - "the beast," to whom Satan will give "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2). His headquarters will be in Rome, where he will at first work in close cooperation with the Roman Church (Rev. 17:3.7).

While we know that the revived Roman Empire need not have exactly the same geographical boundaries as those of Rome in its heyday, yet we see it shaping up just about that way on the north. And when we see the place the Danube had in their defense system in those days we may well wonder if Yugoslavia will not emerge as part of the Western confederacy, instead of being a Russian satellite.

Now when we see things shaping up so rapidly for the days to come after we are safe at home in the Father's house, does it not awaken within us a sense of expectation? Is there not something about all this that sparks a joyful excitement in our souls? Just think! the One who died for us said He will come back for us, and everything indicates that the actual moment when we shall see Him whom absent we love is almost here. Soon we shall hear His voice - that voice that in resurrection called Mary by her own name (John 20:16) - and see His blessed face. May a deep sense of the nearness of that blessed moment stir our hearts with longing response to His word, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

"We wait for Thee - Thou wilt arise

Whilst hope her watch is keeping;

Forgotten then, in glad surprise,

Shall be our years of weeping.

Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh

That ends our pilgrim story

In Thine eternal glory!"

The Manna: Practical Words on Wilderness Food

Exod. 16

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead." John 6:48, 49.

Places of difficulty prove man's weakness and want, but they are made great blessings when the Lord comes into them to supply all that is wanting, in the riches of His great love.

When the Israelites came into the wilderness, they found themselves without food; thus they learned their own poverty and the world's emptiness; but this was the time at which they saw the abundance of the Lord's riches in a way they never saw before. While they were eating leeks and onions in Egypt, or until they came into the wilderness, they never knew what it was to have the Lord raining bread from heaven, so that "Man did eat angels' food [or, "the bread of the mighty," N. Trans.]: He sent them meat to the full." Psalm 78:25. So now there is great blessing in learning that the world is a wilderness, that our poor souls are hungry, and that the world cannot feed them; for then we are in the very place to get bread from heaven. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6:32-35.

The Israelites had no labor by which they could make manna; man had nothing to do with it; it came as independent of man as the rain or dew from heaven. The Lord said, "I will rain bread from heaven for you." Man has equally little now to do with procuring, by his own labor, food for his soul; it is the free gift of God. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Man cannot make me receive Christ into my soul; nor can he hinder me. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13.

Man's foolish heart cannot learn any of God's rich blessings by its own wisdom, till the same gracious hand which gives the gift teaches its value too. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14. When the Lord gave the manna, they knew not what it was until Moses instructed them from the Lord. "When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna [or, What is it?]: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." So it is with the Lord Jesus: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." John 1:10. "The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Isaiah not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." John

6:41-45. If your soul knows not Christ as the true bread, you know not how much you have to learn; if you have found Him to be indeed the Christ, then you are taught of God. (See Matt. 16:16, 17; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 5:1.) This is a great thing to realize, that we know a truth which flesh and blood could never reveal, and through the knowledge of which our souls are eternally blessed; for we are "confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. 2:12.

The Israelites did not deserve the manna; they deserved to be starved, for they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Thus, when the Israelites were provoking God's righteous judgment, instead of raining fire and brimstone, He rained bread from heaven. And what cry has gone up from us to God, that brought down His only begotten Son? Was it a call of love? Oh no! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8. The gift was the free love of God. We had no part in procuring the Savior, nor in His wonderful work. Grace, free grace, is in all the Lord's dealings toward us; "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:9.

Wherever in the wilderness the children of Israel journeyed, the manna was found; it lay round about the host; they could gather and eat in the immediate place of their pilgrimage. And is not this our blessing? Yes; for "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Rom. 10:6,8. Little could those who lived in Egypt know what a rich place for food the wilderness was to the children of God; the Lord rained no manna upon Egypt. And little do the people of the world, who love the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," know what a rich substitute the Lord Jesus Christ is for them all. He who has tasted that the Lord is gracious knows it. But oh! how little does he know compared with what he shall see and have in the fair land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.

The manna was the daily food of the Israelites; the Lord directed them to gather a certain rate every day; and they gathered it every morning. And so now, the Lord Jesus Christ is our daily food; communion with Christ is the daily exercise of the soul that is journeying as a stranger and pilgrim to the incorruptible inheritance. He who neglects this privilege suffers much loss of comfort, and is weak for his dreary journey; for our Lord says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23. If we do not feed on our manna, the burden of the cross will be greater than we can bear; and the narrow way in which the Lamb is followed will be straighter than we can endure. Difficulties are great, but the Lord gives strength to meet them. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33:25.

They gathered manna, every man according to his eating; not all the same quantity, but "some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating."

And so among Christians there are different capacities for receiving the things of Christ; there are fathers, young men, and little children (1 John 2:13): there are those who have need of milk, and not of strong meat; and those who by reason of use have their consciences exercised to discern both good and evil; to them strong meat belongs. (Heb. 5:12-14.) But in Christ is found milk for the weakest, and in Him strong meat for the most advanced; all that is learned about Him is food for the soul. He that knows least sees fullness enough in Him for his soul's only food; he that knows most of Him finds that his soul can feed on all that he has learned.

The Israelites, for the six days of the week, were not permitted to gather manna on one day to eat on another; but they were to gather every day, and to eat every day. Moses said, "Let no man leave of it till the morning." The Lord gave them manna fresh from heaven every day, and therefore they should thankfully gather, and feed on it; heaven was their storehouse, and the Lord was their dispenser. It was their blessing to have no storehouse of their own, but to receive day by day their daily bread. So it is with the Lord's wilderness family now. He is not wearied in communicating daily strength to His poor weak children; and He charges them not to neglect receiving at His hands what He is so ready to give. Christ is the daily food of every believer; but He is so, not as treasured up in our heads, or in the heads of others, but as made precious in the soul, by the power of the Spirit of God, keeping up the communication between us and heaven. There our treasure is; from thence our strength comes - our comfort - our blessing - day by day.

But alas! proud rebellious children suppose they can take care of themselves, and be the safe keepers of their own blessing; so the Israelites hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of the manna until the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And now, if we suppose that any knowledge or experience of Christ should remove the feeling of daily dependence on the Lord for renewed strength, we shall, to our sorrow, find that knowledge will puff up, and breed pride, and vanity, and odious worms, to gnaw the very vitals of our souls.

Christ the Lord from heaven is our daily food, in daily communion through the Spirit; this will have no worm in it, but be meat indeed.

The daily gathering of manna only lasted the six days; when the sabbath of rest came, then they who had gathered on the day before might feed in peace on what was already provided. So with us; now is the time of labor, not of rest; but there remaineth a rest (or keeping of a sabbath) to the people of God (Heb. 4:9); and then believers, when all their labor is over, will enjoy Christ in their everlasting rest. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:16, 17.

But Israel is made our solemn warning. Some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, and they found none; even so the foolish virgins, who waited for oil until it was too late, found none, for while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. If you have not found Christ, beware how you quiet your conscience by thinking a convenient season may come. "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." Isa. 55:6. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 4:7.

Again, the Lord warns us from the lusting of the Israelites. They said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes." Numb. 11:4-6. Could they have a better food than the bread of heaven? and yet they murmured for leeks and onions. They would have manna if they had the garlic of Egypt with it; but God would not let men eat them together. Happy is he who can suffer the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that he may win Christ. They that preferred flesh got it, but got sorrow and death with it; and they that seek the world may get the world, but it will soon be very bitter. Then, dear reader, take heed! The Spirit of God will never show you beauty while in the world, or out of Christ. May we then walk in the Spirit, and we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. There is no security but this. The flesh will always hanker after the world, but the Holy Spirit will glorify Christ; for He will take of His and show it unto us.

Man's Sad History

It is striking to observe in man's history, that whatever good thing God set up, the first thing that man ever did was to ruin it. Man's first act was an act of disobedience; he fell into sin, and broke all relation between himself and God; he was afraid of Him who had filled his cup with blessings. Noah, escaped from the deluge that had swallowed up a whole world except his own family, becomes drunken, and authority is dishonored and lost in him. While the law was being given, before Moses came down from the mount, Israel made for themselves the golden calf. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire on the first day of their service, and Aaron is forbidden to enter into the most holy place in his robes of glory and beauty, and indeed in any robe at all, except on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16). In the same way Solomon, David's son, falls into idolatry, and the kingdom becomes divided. The first head of the Gentiles, if we go on to speak of him on whom God conferred the ruling power, made a great image, and persecuted those who were faithful to Jehovah. Nor has the external or professing church escaped the common law of disobedience and ruin any more than the rest.

A Warning About Marriage

Our reply to your letter is summed up in that pointed inquiry of the prophet, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Let nothing induce you to link yourself with one who is not one with you in the things of the Lord. Think not that you will bring him to see with you after you have taken the false step. As well might you think of pulling a person out of a morass, by plunging into the morass yourself. How could you expect to set another right by going wrong yourself? Shall we do evil that good may come? We hold it to be a fatal mistake for two to come together who are not of one heart and one mind as to Christ and His cause.

The "Me" Did It

What grace and wisdom are needed, when visiting the sick, so that the right word may be spoken. Especially when addressing the unconverted, a place should be taken side by side with them in a spirit of humility and tender sympathy. We who are Christians and seek thus to serve the Lord should remember that once we were "without Christ... in the world," quite as far off from God as any other poor sinner to whom we may speak, and that we owe all that we have, and all that we are, to sovereign mercy, which has called us out and blessed us. The following little incident will illustrate this.

During the summer, a lady who was staying in a country town used to purchase fruit and vegetables at a store, the owner of which was always glad to have an opportunity of talking a little if a customer would stay to hear her. One day this woman told her of a Christian who had recently left the town. "I shall never forget him," said she, "for he was the means of saving my husband who was sick for seventeen weeks. During that time Mr. W. came very often to see him. Once when he was explaining to my poor husband about sin, he says to him, 'We are all sinners, you and me,' and," added the woman, "the 'me' did it. If he had said 'you' are a sinner, my husband would not have listened to him; he would not even have let him stay in his room!"

The poor invalid evidently had a proud, unbroken spirit, but the good Christian visitor humbly took his place with him, as by nature a sinner, only with this difference - that one was a sinner unsaved, and the other was a sinner saved by grace. "The 'me' did it."

My Cup

"The LORD is the portion... of my cup." Psalm 16:5. Such is the language of the psalmist. Tell me, is it yours? Look now into your cup. You may have youth in that cup, beauty, friendship, honors, and riches in that cup; but, if you have only these, you have nothing - nothing but a mere earthly sediment which can never run over but will be emptied at death. Look now into the cup of the believer. There may not be youth there, nor beauty there, nor friendship there, nor honor there, nor riches there; but CHRIST is there, a portion infinitely great, and inexhaustibly fresh. The believer can say, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." No mere sediment this! for, adds the psalmist, "My cup runneth over." Psalm 23:5.

Lessons From the History of Naaman: From God's Counsels to God's Grace

The Gentile stands before the prophet's door a leper, a loathsome object, if rightly viewed, yet, in his own country, a person of rank, and highly esteemed. (See 2 Kings 5.) Before grace can flow out, the soul must be in a condition to receive it, for grace is bestowed, not earned; the favor is on God's part in giving, not on man's in receiving. How many have wrong thoughts on this point, which need to be corrected. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Lord gave Himself for our sins. Paul obtained mercy. (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:13.) At the prophet's door, but not admitted into his presence, Naaman learns this.

The captain of the hosts of Syria was a defiling object which the prophet could not touch, before God. Receiving all honor from his attendants, he received none from Elisha. The prophet will not see him. Who, before this, had refused to admit Naaman into his presence? Where could any be found in Syria or in Israel who would not have run to Naaman? Elisha, acting for God, and filled with God's thoughts about all things, remains within while Naaman stands with his train without; not that he was unconcerned about all this, for he would have him know that there was a prophet in Israel; nor yet that he would not help him, for he sent a message, at once clear in its terms and full of promise for the leper-"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." This was what he wanted, but he did not want it in this way.

He had traveled from Syria to Samaria to be healed, but had never thought of this manner of procedure. Naaman was wroth. How unreasonable! Had he not got what the king of Israel had failed to give him, full directions for his cure? "Go and wash in Jordan seven times... and thou shalt be clean." No uncertainty was there in this language. The promise was sure, the message clear-"Thou shalt be clean." But he was wroth and went away in a rage. Why reject his own mercies? Why refuse to obey? The truth comes out-"I thought." If bidden to do some great thing he would have done it, but this message made nothing of him. Does he stand alone in this? How often have men's thoughts stood in the way of God's grace-"I thought." But what ground had he for thinking how the prophet would act? "I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." He was willing to be healed if he were honored. How many are willing to be saved if only they may retain a good opinion of themselves. As Naaman acted then, many would act in this day. But God acts now in a similar way to what He acted then. He acts in grace, but it is to sinners, to those dead in sins, to those without strength and ungodly, to those who can do nothing for their salvation but receive it, to those who conform to the obedience of faith. The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. This one verse speaks volumes. Men were lost. He came to seek the lost, and to save the lost.

In Naaman's mind all was arranged. He pictured the scene to himself, and made himself the foremost figure in the group. "He will surely come out to me." One might picture the scene as Naaman graphically describes it, the Gentile idolater waited on by the prophet of God. The

incongruity of this he did not then see. We see it. God would visit him in grace, but as one who had no ground of his own to stand on. As a sinner He could meet him. As a leper He could heal him. As the captain of the hosts of the king of Syria He would not receive him. What place has a sinner before God save that of one to whom mercy can be shown? What place is suited for the leper save that outside the camp? Naaman has to learn his place. He may be wroth with the prophet, but he cannot move him. Before him he is only a leper, whatever he may appear before others. Learning his place he has to learn his vileness. He imagined Elisha would have struck his hand over the place, and recovered the leper. A sign-a scene he expected-not a mere word. He did not know what a defiling object he was.

The priest looked on the leper to judge whether he was leprous or not. He touched him only when he was clean. There was no doubt of Naaman's leprosy, for he had come to be healed of it. To touch him ere he was clean would only have defiled the prophet. But further, if he had been able to touch him, and so have healed him, would not men have thought there was virtue in the prophet? By sending him to the Jordan to wash, it would be clearly seen that the cure was direct from God. Man has no virtue in himself-he can only be the channel of God's grace to others. God must have all the glory of the cure, and Naaman be taught his true condition and vileness. We read of but One who touched the leper, and healed him; for in Him resided the virtue needed for his cure. He could do this and God be glorified, for honoring Him they honored the Father. But Elisha being the servant, not the Son-the channel, not the fountain-the instrument, not the worker-could direct, but could not touch.

The proud man must learn another lesson. "Go and wash in Jordan," was the command. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" was the proud captain's rejoinder. To the natural eye they might be better than all the waters of Israel, but they could not help him. He might wash in them seventy times, and at the end he would come out as leprous as he went in. What then were the healing properties of the Jordan? It had none, but there only could he be healed. He must learn the "obedience of faith." So to the Jew the preaching of the cross, Christ crucified, was a stumbling block; to the Greeks it was foolishness; but to the saved it was the power of God. Why, it might be asked, could he not go to the Kishon, or the Jabbok, or any other stream? Why must he wend his way to the Jordan? Because the Jordan is the type of death, and by death alone is a soul delivered from the dominion and guilt of sin. By the blood and death of the Lord Jesus Christ our sins are blotted out. By His death sin is put away as before God. As dead and risen with Christ, souls are freed from the dominion of sin. (Heb. 9:26.28; Rom. 6:13.)

What the Jordan was typically, Israel's history shadowed forth when they passed through it dry shod; the ark, having gone before them, remained in the bed of the river till all had passed through. Elisha shows out in his history something of the typical character of the river, when, with a double portion of Elijah's spirit, he recrossed the Jordan dry-shod, having opened the way with Elijah's mantle to commence his ministry in Israel. The disciples of John tell us something of the same, when they were baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins. In Jordan then must the leper wash if he would be clean.

But might not Abana or Pharpar typify death as well as Jordan? They were rivers of Syria-Jordan was a river of Israel is the simple answer. God could work in grace, even for Gentiles, but He who

worked thus was the God of Israel. The Gentile could get blessing in that dispensation, but only in a way which established the preeminence of Israel. God's name was great in Israel, however much His people had forgotten Him. Naaman had to learn this lesson likewise. He was to be healed, but by the God of Israel, and in the land of Israel. Throughout that dispensation the Gentile was taught that he must receive blessing through the Jew. The woman of Sarepta was preserved alive through the famine, but it was when she received Elijah into her house. The Ninevites were saved from the impending wrath, but it was by the preaching of Jonah. Comparing the Jordan with the rivers of Syria, Naaman might despise it, but there, and there only, could the cure be effected.

He must stoop to own his vileness in God's appointed way. That was all he had to do. That done in obedience to God, he would be healed. What a lesson was this to be learned! to confess his uncleanness, and to confess it as uncleanness of no ordinary kind. A garment, or the person slightly soiled may be cleansed by one washing. He must wash seven times to show his defilement was great; but, when washed seven times, his leprosy would be completely and forever put away. Could he stoop to all this? At first his proud spirit rebelled. The remonstrance, however, of his servants prevailed; he obeyed.

How much then had he to learn? How low had he to come down? He learned from his visit to Jehoram that a mere man could not help him. He learned from the prophet's message that he could direct him. He learned from Elisha's absence what he thought of the leper. He learned from the mention of the Jordan that in God's land only could he get what he wanted; and now, by washing seven times in Jordan, he learned what it was to confess his great uncleanness. Now God could work for him. He has come down to his true place; seven times he has gone down into the Jordan, and the prophet's words are verified; his flesh has come again like the flesh of a little child, and he is clean.

All is changed. He meets with different treatment. The leper is leprous no more. He had stood before the door of the prophet; now he stands before him, no longer a suppliant whom the prophet could not see, but a voluntary confessor of the one true God. "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." This was not the first time, surely, that he crossed the boundary between Syria and Israel, yet till now he knew not that there was but one God, and that in Israel. God, because Israel had failed to do so, now glorifies Himself, and brings Naaman to enter the land as a suppliant, and to leave it as a confessor of the truth.

Naaman learned who God is, and where He can be found, now he learns too that while he can receive from God, the prophet will receive nothing from him. God must be glorified in this too. Naaman can receive the blessing, but it is all of grace. When God gives to sinners, He gives freely. So the answer comes, "As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused." And he acts rightly in refusing it. Could the prophet of God beholden to a Gentile? Impossible. Knowing the spirit in which he should act, like Abraham before the king of Sodom, he declines the offer. It would have been out of character with the times of Elisha if he had received it. That was the day to show what God could do. By-and-by it will be the day to receive from the Gentiles, according to the glowing prediction of Isaiah 60.

But if Elisha will not take from him, Naaman desires something from the land. The leper lately, now a confessor of the one true God, will not stop short of being a worshiper. He will henceforth offer burnt offerings and sacrifices to Jehovah alone. All the sacrifices ever offered to Rimmon had not

wrought his cure. To the One whom he had never worshiped he is indebted for it. To Him alone will he henceforth sacrifice, and he requests two mules' burden of earth for this. He brought treasures with him; he carries back what he esteems of value. Full, a short time previous, of the superiority of Syria over Canaan, he now desires earth from the land of Israel. And why? Were there no artificers in Damascus to design for him an altar for his new worship? Was not this request of his the proof of a perception as a worshiper, faint yet real, of what God is, and what was suited for His worship? Ahaz, years afterward, finds a pattern for an altar at Damascus; Naaman carries back with him two mules' burden of earth. We can hardly suppose that he was acquainted with God's command to Israel (Exod. 20:24). Had he by spiritual instinct a right perception of what was needed? that God required not any ingenuity of man to make an altar fit to offer sacrifices on to Him, and that nothing was so suited for the worship of God in an idolatrous country as the altar of earth-a silent, yet solid witness to the immeasurable distance between man and his Maker, who seeks for nothing from man but real worship and heart service, and to whose glory he cannot add a single ray!

Here a difficulty arises. Naaman will worship Jehovah alone, but can he refuse to attend his master, the king, in the house of Rimmon? "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon... the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing." (2 Kings 5:18.) Here again we see surely the spiritual instincts of a newborn soul. Fresh from the Jordan, he learns how incompatible is all other worship with that of the true God. God cannot admit of a rival. He sees something of this, and learns that there cannot be the blending of the false with the true. He cannot worship Jehovah and Rimmon. As a heathen, he might have introduced the worship of Jehovah to his countrymen, as a fresh rite, to be practiced side by side with the old one. As a newborn soul he sees this cannot be. What is he to do? Elisha answers, "Go in peace" -which at first sight appears to be a strange reply. Is God willing to share His glory with another? Could Elisha have bowed himself in the house of Rimmon, if honored by being the support of the king of Syria? A wise answer it was, if we reflect on it. He leaves Naaman to be taught of God, as he is able to receive it. He could not sanction what Naaman spoke of. He did not excuse it, nor did he make light of it. He refused to direct him about it. Could Naaman have walked by Elisha's faith?

Naaman's words show he saw it was wrong to act as he speaks of, but he did not see how wrong. Could one who saw it clearly have said, "The LORD pardon thy servant in this thing"? When it was a question of teaching Naaman the freeness of grace, Elisha is plain and decided; when it is a question of how Naaman should act, his eyes as yet only half opened, Elisha leaves him with God. Should we not do well to follow the prophet sometimes in this?

How this difficulty of Naaman's forces on the mind the moral state of the world; for no sooner has a soul received from God in grace than its difficulties begin. It finds that the ways, and maxims, and habits, and even the religion of the world is opposed to God. The subject of grace, taught about himself, and brought down to the obedience of faith, and the change in him which was made apparent the moment he submitted to God's words, affords us a clear and simple illustration of the way of salvation, with this difference-Naaman was told to wash; sinners are told to believe. He was to wash in the Jordan; sinners are to believe on One who has died-the Lord Jesus- and has been raised again for our justification. The object of faith is different; but the result when apprehended is the same-obedience of faith, and the perfect cleansing from all that defiles. And we have divine

warranty for taking up this history in this light, for the Lord Himself referred to it in the synagogue at Nazareth as an instance of grace which can go out beyond the narrow bounds of God's earthly people.

Lessons From the History of Naaman: From God's Grace to God's Government

We must never confound these two things. God will show grace to sinners; He will carry on His government among His people. Gehazi is an instance of this. He could not understand the refusal of Elisha. "Behold," he says, "my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." It was not to spare Naaman that Elisha refused the present. It was because grace was free, and the time to receive from the Gentile had not yet arrived. Gehazi could not understand either the one or the other. Had he possessed a right perception of grace, he would have gloried rather in the presents returning home, a witness that the God of Israel could give even to an enemy of Israel without receiving anything from him in return. Had he imbibed the true spirit of the time, he would have learned the incongruity of their being enriched by the Syrian. But he understood neither.

The evil desire stimulated him, and he ran after Naaman till he reached the object of his search. To the salutation "Is all well?" he responds, "All is well." Why then this haste, why this pursuit? Eager to get something from Naaman, he has a lie ready, which again reveals how he had failed to understand the right adjustment of things. Two children of the sons of the prophets were in want, and Elisha had sent to request something for them. Could not God have provided for His own servants without spoiling a Gentile? Could not Elisha look to God, and not to Naaman, for what they might need? Gehazi sees not the inconsistency of his story. He tells it - he gets what he asks, and more. Naaman is ready to give - that was right. Gehazi was desirous to receive - that was wrong. Bound on two of the young men, the presents are carried back, and Gehazi stores them away. He has perfectly succeeded in his plan, and he stands before his master. Another lie is now told. He forgets now before whom he stands. Could not the prophet search him? Could not he test most severely the accuracy of his statements? Blind to everything, he utters another lie when questioned - "Whence comest thou?" He might deceive Naaman - he cannot deceive Elisha. "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" An eye had seen him. The prophet's heart knew everything. Gehazi stood before him convicted, and sentence goes forth: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever." He and his seed after him should be standing witnesses of what it was to forget the character of his day.

Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?" Gehazi had forgotten the character of his day. Israel had before that time spoiled the Gentiles. They spoiled the Egyptians before they departed from Egypt. They enriched themselves with the spoil of Midian just previous to their entrance into the land. This was in keeping with the times. The jewels of gold were applied to the service of the sanctuary (such of them as had not been used for the golden calf). The plunder of the Midianites was apportioned out as God had directed; but Gehazi had no command to receive from Naaman,

and had no intention of enriching the sanctuary with his gifts.

Besides, all this was out of keeping with the character of his day. Elisha's presence in Israel as prophet was in consequence of their departure from God. The servant should have discerned this. The prophet's presence was a constant protest against the condition of the people among whom he dwelt. Were those who professed to know this to act as if the time of rest and enjoyment had arrived? It was the day for protesting against the settlement of Israel as "wines on the lees," unconcerned about God's glory, and indifferent to the claims of His holiness.

Were the professed servants of Jehovah to act as if the warfare was over? Under an idolatrous king in Samaria there could be no rest for those who had understanding of the times. A king in Samaria, with David's heir sitting on his throne at Jerusalem, showed at once that all was not right, nor the time for enjoyment arrived.

The condition of things around them, God's servants might not be empowered to alter; but they must not acquiesce in it. Elisha knew this, and acted accordingly. Gehazi was blinded to this, and thus fell under the exercise of God's government. For Israel the day will dawn when they shall sit each man under his vine and fig tree. But the time for repose, and making themselves at home in the land, was not then. Gehazi forgot all this. Need we show how this has teaching for believers now? May we show that like Elisha we have the mind of God, and know the character of our day, and what is suited to it. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." It is future, not present. It will be enjoyed above, not on earth.

Lessons From the History of Naaman: God Will Be Glorified

In the days of Elisha God had chastised Israel because of their great wickedness, and had let their enemies triumph over them; but He cared for His own glory, and vindicated it, as the history of Naaman shows in the most marked manner.

It was a dark period of Israel's history. Jehoram sat on the throne of his father Ahab. He put away the image of Baal which Ahab had made, "nevertheless he cleaved," we read, "unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; he departed not there from." Though outwardly less bad than his father, he was an idolater. King over the largest portion of God's earthly people, in his heart he knew not God. The king and the nation which should have glorified Him did not, so God orders events that both Israel and the Gentiles should see He was the one true God who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

The history of Naaman sets forth (1) God's counsels, step by step, unfolded; (2) God's grace, because it is grace, going out to one who could claim nothing on the ground of covenant or promise; and (3) God's government, because He is holy, in active exercise in the midst of His professing people.

GOD'S COUNSELS ARE UNFOLDED

If the Lord Jehovah was greater than all gods could He not have saved Israel from their enemies? If He was the true God, would He have allowed the idol-worshipping Syrians to overcome them in battle? If the God of Israel was omniscient must He not have foreseen all that would happen? Why then did He not counteract the plans of the enemy, and thwart the military arrangements of the captain of the hosts of Syria? Such thoughts might have filled men's minds when they saw the land of Israel at the mercy of a foreign king, and the people of Israel unable to resist the Gentile power. But the God of Israel was the true God. He was greater than all gods. He was omniscient, and He would show it. It was His plan that Naaman was all the time working out, however much he might think it was his own. It was God who was prospering the armies of Syria, though they might ascribe their success to Rimmon, their god. He could have interposed and have discomfited the hosts of Syria, as He did the army of Moab shortly before; but then, He was protecting Judah, as yet faithful to Him; now He was chastising Israel, notoriously unfaithful.

How changed now was everything in Israel! Naaman was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria. Often before had the Lord granted deliverance to Israel; now, for the first time, we read of His giving the victory to Syria. He who had formerly gone with the hosts of Israel, had now gone forth with the armies of Syria. In the days of Joshua, Israel had witnessed what the Lord could do for them. In the days of David, the sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees told of the presence of the Lord preceding the armed hosts of Israel to battle. The stars, in their courses, had fought against Sisera; great hailstones had smitten down the retreating hosts of the Canaanites; and thunder had discomfited the Philistines in the days of Samuel. Now we read the Lord was found with their enemies, and

gave them deliverance by Naaman. This was the first link in the chain of events as set forth in this history.

Next, who was this Naaman? A mighty man of valor, a great man with his master, high in favor at court. What was there in the whole world that he needed? Place, honor, fame, riches-all these were his. He had all that the world could give, short of a throne. But the world could not supply the one thing he wanted - health. God had withheld it - he was a leper. All his possessions, if added together and sold at the price he put on them, could not have purchased for him the much coveted boon - health. The one bitter ingredient in his otherwise full cup of happiness was that he was a leper. The hand of God was evidently on him, not to debar him this object of desire but to bestow it. Before, however, it could be bestowed, he must be brought down to supplicate for this blessing in that land over whose armies he had triumphed, and from the servant of that God whose people he had overcome in battle.

But how should he hear of the prophet who would recover him of his leprosy? Here a third link in the chain is disclosed. In the wars between Syria and Israel a little maid had been taken captive by the Syrians, and she waited on Naaman's wife. A daughter of Israel in captivity in the land of Syria! What could she do there? How could she do service for God? Who would be inclined to hearken to her voice? Her age would not command the attention of others. Her position would not add weight to her words. Looked at outwardly it was not much that she could do, but it was all that was required, and she did it. She told her mistress of the prophet in Samaria, and the little maid's speech reached the ears of the king of Syria. Naaman was sent to Samaria to be healed but, as is ever the case when God deals in grace, to receive much more than he asked for. He sought for health; he got light. He desired healing and he got, we may well believe, life. He learned who was the true God, and became a worshiper of Jehovah. He reached Samaria with his retinue and his presents, and now, before we get God's grace flowing out to him, we get man, as he is under various aspects, brought before us.

In Naaman we have man as one in need, who keenly feels his want, but cannot by any plan of his own supply it. From the letter of the king of Syria we see man as he is by nature in utter ignorance of God - the little maid had spoken of the prophet of God; he wrote to the king of Israel to recover Naaman of his leprosy. There is not a thought of God in his letter. His ideas, apparently, do not travel beyond the range of the things of sight. "I have therefore sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." God was not in his thoughts when he wrote this to Jehoram. Well might the latter exclaim, as he read it, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" Perfectly true - who can heal the leper but God only? His reasoning was just, but he affords us an instance of man in apostasy. He knows something about God, but he does not know God. A difficulty arises; he cannot meet it. He rent his clothes, he spoke to his counselors, but did nothing. His hands hung down in feebleness. The only stay of the heart in a day of difficulty, the only source of wisdom, he had forsaken. He sees that ruin may be before him, but cannot avert it. He is utterly helpless, a miserable exhibition, surely, of one of God's professing people.

The king of Syria, in nature's darkness, is ignorant about God; the king of Israel, in apostasy, has no stay for his soul, no refuge to which he can turn.

How unlike the conduct of Jehoram was the conduct of Hezekiah when he received a letter from a Gentile sovereign. He read it, and spread it before the Lord, and received an answer. Jehoram read his, reasoned about it, but took it not to God. How could he turn to Him whose truth he had given up, and whose worship he openly discountenanced. But God has a witness in Samaria, and in the prophet we see one in communion with God. That which caused such commotion in the house of Jehoram, affrights him not. He knows how to act. "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Jehoram never spoke about God's prophet. Naaman might learn from the king the sad condition of an apostate; he would learn from Elisha about God, and what He can do.

Nevertheless

The word which forms the heading of this paper occurs in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, and the last verse. It is a very important word, as indicating what we are all so prone to forget, that there are two sides to every question and, in particular, to the great question before the Apostle's mind in this passage. He is speaking of the subject of marriage, and of the relative duties of husband and wife, and he uses as an illustration the great mystery of Christ and the Church.

Now there are two sides to this subject. There is a heavenly side, and there is an earthly side. We need them both. We cannot dispense with either; and the Holy Ghost has, in His infinite wisdom, bound them indissolubly together by the little word "nevertheless"; and, may we not say, What God has joined together let not man put asunder? It is quite true - blessedly true - that the Church's relation to Christ is heavenly, that the Church is called to know, rejoice in, feed upon, walk with, follow, and be conformed to a heavenly Christ.

All this is what we may call vital and fundamental truth which cannot for a moment be given up or lost sight of without giving up, so far, the heavenly side of Christianity.

But are we not in danger of forgetting the practical application of all this to our present walk on the earth amid the stern realities of actual life day by day? Are not husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, earthly relationships? Unquestionably. True it is they are formed upon a heavenly model, and to be carried out after a heavenly pattern, as they also rest upon a heavenly base.

But still they are relationships in nature, formed on the earth, and to be carried out in daily life. There will be no such relationships in heaven. They do not belong to the resurrection state. They belong to nature, to earth, to our time-condition, and we are called to walk in them as Christian men, women, and children, and to glorify God by our spirit and temper and manner, our whole deportment therein, from hour to hour, and day to day.

Thus, for example, of what use is it for a man to traffic in lofty theories respecting the heavenly relationship of Christ and the Church, while he fails, every day of his life, in his earthly relationship as a husband? His wife is neglected, perhaps treated coldly or harshly; she is not nourished, cherished, sustained, and ministered to according to the heavenly model of Christ and His Church.

No doubt, the same pointed question may be asked in reference to the wife, and to all the other sacred relationships of our earthly and natural existence, for there are two sides to every question.

Hence the very great importance of the Apostle's "nevertheless." We may depend upon it, it has a wide application. It is most evident that the Holy Ghost anticipated the need of such a qualifying, modifying, regulating clause, when, having descanted upon the heavenly side of the subject of marriage, He adds, "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Christian reader, let us remember the two sides. Let us deeply ponder the inspired "nevertheless." We may rest assured there is a need of it. There is the most urgent need of the practical application of divine and heavenly truth to our natural relationships and earthly ways. We have to remember that God recognizes nature, else why have we marriage? Flesh is not recognized, but nature is, and even admitted as a teacher (see 1 Cor. 11:14). We are not yet actually in heaven. We are there, thank God, as to our standing, there in principle, there in spirit, there by faith. Our life, our portion, our hope, our home are there because Christ is there.

But we are here on the earth, called to represent Christ in this world, as He represents us in heaven. God views us as men, women, and children, called to tread the sand of the desert, and to meet the positive realities of daily life. Life is a reality - an actual, bona fide practical reality; and our God has provided for us, in view of this fact, by the priestly ministry of Christ on high, and by the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the teachings of Holy Scripture here below. We must have what is real to meet what is real. We are not called, thank God, to be occupied with visionary notions, with empty theories, with a powerless sentimentality, nor even with one-sided truth. No; we are called to be real, genuine, sound, practical Christian men, women, and children. We are called to display in our daily history here on this earth the practical results of that which we know and enjoy by faith in heaven. In one word, we must never forget that when the very highest truths are being unfolded before us, there is a healthful and holy application of these truths indicated by the inspired "nevertheless."

Not to Be Seen of Men: Hypocrites

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matt. 6:16.18

The special point in these verses seems to be that we ought not to seek the notice of others in the matter of fasting. "That thou appear not unto men to fast." There is nothing said about trying to hide it from men. In short there should be entire forgetfulness of self and of the thoughts of others in all the great branches of practical righteousness presented in this marvelous discourse; namely, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Hypocrites sought the notice of people in these things; we should not do so, but seek to act before God alone. I cannot help it if my servant happens to see me at prayer, or if a person in the street sees me giving an alms, or if my friends know that I am fasting. But, were I to do any of these things in order to be seen, I should be acting as the hypocrites, and I should have my reward in the praise bestowed upon me for my wonderful piety and benevolence. The grand point is to walk in the immediate presence of God. This will give reality, simplicity, and moral elevation to our entire course, conduct, and character.

Nourishment for the New Life

It is well to begin every day with God and His Word. Let your first conscious moments be spent in His holy presence, and your first desires be expressed to Him. Start on your daily course from the throne of grace; in the evening, close it there; yet, never leave that sanctuary all day long.

"Childlike, attend what Thou wilt say;

Go forth and do it while 'tis day,

Yet never leave my sweet retreat."

We are only safe when trusting in Him, and walking in the light of His countenance. Seek, by God's grace, to be kept in the place of simple dependence on Himself.

There is deep reality in communion with God, through the medium of His Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit. "How sweet," says the psalmist, "are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

When our spiritual appetite is good, we are sure to grow. We need spiritual as well as natural food every morning, but we are more in danger of forgetting the former than the latter. Hence the importance of the exhortation, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure, unmixed] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Show that you heartily desire it, that it is sweet and pleasant to your taste, that you are nourished by it, that you are satisfied with it, and that you return to it with increasing delight.

Oh! that ALL in God's family thus relished their divine food! Oh, to cleave to God's Word for everything past, present, and future. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever."

May the Lord Himself be richly with you, filling your heart with heavenly food and spiritual gladness, and causing you to sing for joy.

Obedience and Dependence Are Necessary: Convincing Evidence May Deceive

The business of a servant is to obey, not to reason - to act according to his master's directions, not according to his own will or judgment. If he only does exactly what his master tells him, he is not responsible for the consequences.

The one grand business of a servant is to obey. This is the moral perfection of a servant. Alas! How rare! There has been but one absolutely obedient and perfectly dependent Servant in the entire history of this world - the Man Christ Jesus. His meat and His drink were to obey. "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:7, 8.

Our blessed Lord Jesus found in the will of God His only motive for action. There was nothing in Him that needed to be restrained by the authority of God. His will was perfect and His every movement was of necessity - the very necessity of His perfect nature - in the current of the divine will. "Thy law is within My heart"; "I delight to do Thy will"; "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

Now what could Satan do with such a man as this? Absolutely nothing. He tried to withdraw Him from the path of obedience and the place of dependence, but in vain. "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Surely God would give His Son bread. No doubt; but the perfect Man refused to make bread for Himself. He had no command, no authority, and therefore no motive for action. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So throughout the entire temptation. Nothing could withdraw the blessed One from the path of simple obedience. "It is written," was His one unvarying answer. He would not, could not, act without a motive; and His only motive was found in the will of God. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart."

Such was the obedience of Jesus Christ - an obedience perfect from first to last. And not only was He perfectly obedient, but perfectly dependent. Though God over all, blessed forever, yet, having taken His place as a man in this world, He lived a life of perfect dependence on God. He could say, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And again, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust." And again, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb."

He was wholly and continually cast upon God from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary; and when He had finished all, He surrendered His spirit into His Father's hand, and His

flesh rested in hope. His obedience and dependence were divinely perfect throughout.

But we must now ask the reader to turn with us for a few moments to two examples of the very opposite of all this - two cases in which, through lack of obedience and dependence, the most disastrous results followed.

Let us in the first place turn to the 13th chapter of The First Book of Kings. Doubtless the case is familiar to us; but let us look at it in connection with our present theme.

"And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD." Thus far all was right. He spoke by the word of God, and the power of God accompanied the testimony, and the spirit of the king was humbled and subdued for the moment.

But more than this. The man of God was enabled to refuse the king's invitation to come home with him and refresh himself, and receive a reward. "And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so it was charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest."

All this was lovely - perfectly delightful to dwell upon. The feet of the man of God stood firm in the bright and blessed path of obedience, and all was victory. The offers of the king were flung aside without a moment's hesitation. Half the royal house could not tempt him off the narrow, holy, happy path of obedience. He rejected every overture, and turned to pursue the straight path opened before him by the word of the Lord. There was no reasoning, no questioning, no hesitation. The word of the Lord settled everything. He had but to obey, regardless of consequences. And so far he did, and all was well.

But mark the sequel. "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel" - reader, beware of old prophets! And this old prophet followed the man of God, and said unto him, "Come home with me, and eat bread." This was the devil in a new shape. What the word of a king had failed to do, the word of a prophet might accomplish. It was a wile of Satan for which the man of God was evidently unprepared. The garb of a prophet deceived him, and threw him completely off his guard; we can at once perceive his altered tone. When replying to the king he spoke with vividness, force, and bold decision - "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee." And then he added with equal force his reason for refusing: "For so it was charged me by the word of the LORD."

But in his reply to the prophet there is manifest decline in the way of energy, boldness, and decision. He says, "I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee." And in assigning the reason instead of the forcible word "charged," we have the feeble word, "It was said to me."

In short, the whole tone is lower. The Word of God was losing its true place and power in his soul. No change had passed over that Word. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven"; and had that Word been hidden in the heart of the man of God, had it been dwelling richly in his soul, his answer to the prophet would have been as distinct and decided as his answer to the king. "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." The spirit of obedience is the great moral safeguard against every scheme and every snare of the enemy. The enemy may shift his ground; he may change his tactics; he may vary his agency; but obedience to the plain and

simple Word of God preserves the soul from all his wicked schemes and crafty devices. The devil can do nothing with a man who is absolutely ruled by the Word of God, and refuses to move the breadth of a hair without divine authority.

But note how the enemy urged his point with the man of God. "He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house."

Now what should the man of God have said to this? If the Word of his Lord had been abiding in him, he would at once have said, "If ten thousand prophets and ten thousand angels were to say, Bring him back, I should regard them all as liars and emissaries of the devil, sent forth to allure me from the holy, happy path of obedience." This would have been a sublime reply. It would have the same heavenly ring about it as is exhibited in these glowing words of the Apostle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

But alas! alas! the man of God stepped off the path of obedience; and the very man whom Satan had used to draw him off, became the mouthpiece of Jehovah to announce in his ears the terrible consequence. He lied when Satan used him. He spoke truth when God used him. The erring man of God was slain by a lion because he disobeyed the word of the Lord. Yes, he stepped off the narrow path of obedience into the wide field of his own will, and there he was slain.

Reader, let us beware of old prophets and angels of light! Let us, in the true spirit of obedience, keep close, very close, to the Word of our God. We shall find the path of obedience both safe and pleasant, holy and happy.

And now for a moment ere we close, let us glance at the 9th chapter of Joshua, which records for our admonition the manner in which even Joshua himself was ensnared through lack of simple dependence upon God. We do not quote the passage or enter into any detail. The reader can turn to the chapter and ponder its contents.

Why was Israel beguiled by the craft of the Gibeonites? Because they leaned to their own understanding and judged by the sight of their eyes instead of waiting upon God for guidance and counsel. He knew all about the Gibeonites. He was not deceived by their tattered rags and moldy bread; and neither would they have been, had they only looked to Him.

But here they failed. They did not wait on God. He would have guided them. He would have told them who these crafty strangers were. He would have made all clear for them, had they simply waited on Him in the sense of their own ignorance and feebleness. But no; they would think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and reason from what they saw, and draw their own conclusions. All these things they would do; and hence the tattered garments of the Gibeonites accomplished what the frowning bulwarks of Jericho had failed to do.

Now we may be quite sure that Israel had no thought of making a league with any of the Canaanites. No, they were in terrible indignation when they discovered that they had done so. But they did it, and had to abide by it. It is easier to make a mistake than to rectify it, and so the Gibeonites remained as a striking memorial of the evil of not waiting on God for counsel and guidance.

May the Holy Spirit teach us from all that has passed before us, the solemn importance of "obedience" and "dependence."

Occupy Till I Come: the Word to All Servants

Luke 19:11, 27

Few portions of Scripture contain fuller instruction as to God's present ways than this parable. Its object is disclosed in the opening verse where we learn that Jesus spoke it "because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Just afterward, as He entered Jerusalem, His disciples hailed Him as King saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." v. 38. They expected, as the two disciples on the way to Emmaus declared, that He would at that time "have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21), and that the kingdom of God would thus be manifested. We see from Luke 17:20, 21 that the kingdom had already come, but it was not yet with outward show or "observation." It was even then "among" them, but neither then, nor now, as a visible kingdom, recognizable by the world. The real "children of the kingdom" may recognize it in its present hidden form; others in Christendom may acknowledge it as a kingdom in word, but with no true sense of God's sovereignty. The rest of the world can see in it nothing but a religious profession, with no character of a kingdom about it.

While the kingdom of God, in the veiled form in which it now exists, had already come, it had not then, nor indeed has yet, appeared, or been manifested, and it was to check the eager anticipations of the disciples as to its immediate appearance that this parable was spoken. In it, therefore, the Lord details what is to happen before that appearing for which they were looking should take place. He Himself, seen here under the figure of the nobleman, was to go into a far country - in fact, to leave the world for heaven - there to receive the kingdom, and having received it, to return. Meanwhile, those who denied His rights - the Jews especially, but also the world as a whole - not only rejected Him in person while here, but "sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." v. 14. Such a message was the stoning of Stephen, and the persistent refusal to hear the testimony of the apostles and of the Holy Ghost after Christ's departure. This is, and has been, the attitude of the world as a whole, and of the Jews in particular, toward Jesus since He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"; and this will be their attitude as a nation till He comes again. He will then return, having had the nations given Him as His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; and those who would not that He should reign over them will be dealt with in judgment.

But between His departure and His return there is, besides the citizens who rejected Him, another class of persons called His servants. These, though left among the citizens, are clearly of a different class. They are in the city to care for their Lord's things entrusted to their charge. While the citizens reject Him as their King, these own His authority; while the citizens have no thought of His return, these occupy till He comes. These servants represent Christendom - those who, in name at least, acknowledge the authority of the rejected Lord. Is it not startling to contrast this picture of the responsibility of the Christian professor with the thought which even true believers commonly cherish as to their place in the world? What is spoken of here is no limited class specially set apart as ministers or servants. The responsibility pointed out is the common

responsibility of Christendom; and surely it is impossible to look at Christendom in the light of the responsibility here disclosed without a sad sense of its utter failure to execute the charge with which it has been entrusted. Nevertheless, the responsibility of the Christian profession is to occupy for Christ till He returns; and according to this responsibility it will be judged.

By the mass of nominal Christians the charge is simply disregarded. If the pound is not thrown away, or the very name of Christian abandoned, this is all that can be said. Hard thoughts of God are entertained, His gifts forgotten or despised, and His demands regarded as unreasonable exactions. He is looked upon as "an austere man," taking up what He had not laid down, reaping what He had not sown. And yet man, with his usual inconsistency, while judging God as exacting more than is due, has taken no pains to earn, as it were, anything for Him. He is therefore judged out of his own mouth, and condemned as an unprofitable servant.

Leaving the sad case of mere professors, let us ask to what extent we answer to the view here presented of the believer's responsibility. To how many true Christians is the thought present, "I am here for Christ, in His interest in the scene where He has been rejected"? What would the world appear to one who had this conception of the place he was called upon to occupy?

The cross, as the means by which sins were put away, is of course valued by all real believers, and in this sense they can and do glory in it. But Paul gloried in it for another reason, and saw in the death of Christ another aspect. To him that death was not only deliverance from sins, but deliverance "from this present evil world." To him that cross was not only the place where sin had been judged, but the means by which "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He saw in the death of Christ the death of all, "and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." What complete separation from the world, what complete devotedness to Christ, do we see here! And yet this is only what becomes one who, in the light of Christ's own words, realizes the place he is responsible to occupy in this world. For must there not be a complete separation of heart and feeling between the servant who is truly occupying for Christ, and the world which has rejected Him? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

It may be urged that the citizens here do not represent nominal Christians who constitute the world around us. This is true; but if nominal Christians have become just as much "of the world" as the heathen, if Christ's lordship is just as little practically admitted among them as in the rest of the world, is the call for separation any the less urgent? Is the world any more allowable because it takes the name of Christ, while practically it disowns and rejects Him? If there is one rule of separation in Scripture more stringent than another, it is the separation from those who, while called by Christ's name, are walking in an ungodly fashion. If there is one scene over which judgment is impending with more fearful gloom than over any other, it is over this very Christendom which, on account of the privileges it has enjoyed and the sad use it has made of them, is held as especially guilty in God's sight. The principle of separation, therefore, applies even with greater force to the believer in the world of Christendom around him at present than to the believer in the midst of Jews and heathen.

What the Lord desires in His people is wholeheartedness for Himself. This does not imply separation from the ordinary occupations of the world. But the question is whether these

occupations entangle the heart and become our objects; or whether, while pursuing these occupations, the heart is still free for Christ. Is getting on in the world what fills our thoughts? or, are we, while providing things honest in the sight of all men, really living among men and before men as those who are not their own, but bought with a price - as those who, being constrained by the love of Christ, are seeking, however feebly, to live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again?

Few, of course, are called upon to preach Christ, but all are called upon to live Christ. And to live Christ involves taking His place in relationship to the world. "They are not of the world," He said, "even as I am not of the world." It is easy to imagine cases, and to ask where the line is to be drawn. The heart that is in communion with Christ, though it may not know how to lay down principles, will distinguish readily enough what will suit Him, and what would grieve His Spirit. Indeed it is only Christians who are anxious to mix with the world that have any difficulty in the matter. The world quickly enough discerns what is consistent and what is inconsistent in a Christian, and estimates without difficulty the value of the testimony given by a worldly believer. If the heart is really true to Christ it will unconsciously bear witness to Him, and separate from the world which knows Him not. The spirit and objects of the world cannot have a place in the soul that is filled with Christ. The pursuits and riches of the world will appear worthless to him whose affections are set on things above.

The character of the true servant will show itself in various ways. If to serve Christ is really the object, His own Word and directions will be the rule of service. Who could suppose the servants of the absent Lord taking counsel with the citizens that had cast Him out, as to how they should care for His goods? Is it any better when believers go to the world, or resort to worldly principles, worldly wisdom, and worldly alliances in the hope of furthering the cause of Christ? The power is of God who does not need our wisdom as to the mode of carrying on His work, but who requires our obedience as servants. No truth is more needed at the present moment than that of the all-sufficiency of the Word of God. Whatever, under the name of service, is not built on this foundation, is not service such as the Lord owns. There may, of course, be earnestness and truth of heart, which the Lord does own even where much is added which He could not sanction; but in these cases His blessing is on what comes from Himself, not on what comes from the flesh and the world.

There is another thing which will mark the true servant. He will be waiting for the coming of his Lord. If the heart is really estranged from the world and set on heavenly things, what expectation will bring such blessedness as the thought of the Lord's return? The idle servant whose heart was full of hard thoughts about his Lord, could of course entertain no bright hopes in connection with His coming again. To him the thought must necessarily be unwelcome. But what joy would the prospect bring to the heart of the faithful servant who had been living and laboring for Him during His absence! Are our hearts thus waiting and longing? Are we occupying for Christ during His absence, seeking to act in obedience to His Word, waiting in joyful anticipation for His return?

On the Move

The epistle to the Hebrews does not present Christians as already in heaven, but as on their way to it. It abounds in warning and exhortation to get on. It keeps us continually on the move. It is characterized by such utterances as, "Let us fear"; "Let us labor"; "Let us come boldly"; "Let us go on to perfection"; "Let us draw nigh"; "Let us hold fast"; "Let us consider one another"; "Let us run"; "Let us go forth." The epistle to

Move the Ephesians gives us one grand aspect of Christianity; and the epistle to the Hebrews gives us the other. In the former, the Christian is presented as seated in heaven, and coming down to walk on earth in all the varied relationships of life. In Hebrews the Christian is presented as starting from earth, responsive to the heavenly call, and pressing forward to the rest that remaineth.

Only and Early

Read Psalm 62 and 63

There is a sweet and profitable lesson taught us in the above psalms. The heart is ever prone to divide its confidence between God and the creature. This will never do. We must "wait... only upon God." "He only" must be our "rock," our "salvation," and our "defense." This is Psalm 62.

Then we are frequently tempted to look to an arm of flesh first, and when that fails we look to God. This will never do, either. He must be our first as well as our only resource. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee." This is the way in which the heart should ever treat the blessed God. This is the lesson of Psalm 63. When we have learned the blessedness of seeking God "only," we shall be sure to seek Him "early."

Out and Out

We are most thoroughly persuaded that what is needed for the day in which our lot is cast is whole-hearted, out-and-out, undivided consecration of heart to Christ - a thorough breaking with the world in its every phase - that perfect rest and satisfaction of heart in God Himself which renders a man wholly independent of all that this wretched world has to offer. If there be not this, we need not look for any real progress in the divine life.

Patriarchal Faith: a Pattern for Today

The patriarchs had come forth from the place of nature, or of the flesh, in the faith of a promised inheritance in the land of Canaan. And what is to be noticed in the strength and victory of their faith is this: they cling to that promise in spite of two very severe trials of it; that is, in the face of the poverty and sorrow and disappointment which they constantly experienced in the place of the promise, and also in spite of the desirableness and attractions and advantages which they enjoyed outside of it.

There was famine in Canaan in the days of Abraham, and again in the days of Isaac, and again in the days of Jacob. Abraham, moreover, witnessed in that land the abominations of Sodom, and the common strife and contention of the potsherd of the earth. Isaac is forced from one spot of it to another by the injurious treatment of the natives of that land. Jacob is forced out of it by the threats of his brother Esau. And further, it was the scene of humbling and of discipline to them in their day, by reason of their own evil ways in the sight of the Lord.

Such was Canaan to the patriarchs. They were, I may say, dishonored and disappointed, and well nigh heartbroken in that land of promise. But that which lay outside it was altogether different. It was just as attractive to them as Canaan had been trying and humbling.

Egypt, for instance, enriches Abraham when Canaan had left him at death's door; and to Jacob the same Egypt had become the scene and the occasion of all that heart or flesh could have desired, for he came to the end of a weary pilgrimage in that land. He had known plenty of sorrow in Canaan, both before he left it for Padan-aram, and after he returned; but Egypt at last made up to him, and much more, for all his losses and sorrows. By royal grant he received the fairest and richest portion of it. He was honored and cherished there, and saw his family in increasing prosperity around him. The desires of his heart seemed all to get their answer there. And to crown all, Egypt restored to him Joseph whom he thought some beast in the former land had torn to pieces.

Here was Egyptian flattery and fascination indeed; and that too, in full contrast with all that Canaan had been to him. At evening time there was light, but it was an evening in Egypt. His eye might well have desired the lengthening and lingering of such a sunset, and his heart might have been tempted to contrast with it the clouds of his morning and his noonday in Canaan. But faith is called a conqueror. It tries many a question with nature, and gets many a fair and brilliant victory in some of the saints. And so it was here with Jacob, though it may be humbling to one's own heart to trace it; for we have here before us a beautiful witness that in spite of all this Canaan, and not Egypt, was the patriarch's object.

This is the victory that overcame Egypt then, and overcomes the world to this hour. No recollections of sorrows or disappointments in Canaan, no present possessions of honors and wealth in Egypt, moved him. The promise of God ruled in his heart. Of Canaan as promised of God he spoke; in Canaan he hoped; in the place of his present prosperity he was a stranger, and

thought of home only in the degraded and impoverished land he had left behind him. It was in Canaan he would be buried. It was there he was in spirit when he blessed his children; and it was there he gave the double portion to his adopted first-born.

There is something very fine in this, and something significant and seasonable for us. For I may surely say at the present time through which we are passing, there is the poor Canaan and the wealthy and important Egypt. That which, like Canaan to the patriarchs, connects itself with God in the thoughts of faith is in a small and enfeebled state, while the world around is growing in its proper greatness and strength and dignity every hour.

It may be hard to learn this lesson which Jacob practiced. We may see it on the page of his history, without finding it on any corresponding one of our own.

Joseph, however, after Jacob, illustrates this same power of faith. Egypt had received him after Canaan had cast him out. Out of the one land he had been sold as a bond slave; in the other he had been seated on the second seat in the kingdom. But withal (for faith is "the victory that overcometh the world") Egypt never became Canaan to Joseph. The promise of God lived in Joseph's heart as it had lived in Jacob's. Disappointments and sorrows in Canaan, flatteries and successes and honors in Egypt, wrought not their natural results in that heart, because it was thus the seat of the promise of God. This was in the vigorous words of the Apostle (in the patriarchal form which such energy would take) "a laying hold upon eternal life" - which some of us know so little of.

But I must observe something further. It is felt by us to be a serious and hazardous thing at times to let the world know that we have learned this lesson - that poor Canaan is better than wealthy Egypt. We fully understand that men cannot lightly have the good thing they are nourishing and improving thus slighted. It is a reproach on themselves when the world is undervalued.

There was a moment in Joseph's history, as I judge, when he felt this, when he had this experience of which I speak.

Jacob his father, when dying, had made him swear that he would bury him in the land of Canaan. When Joseph comes to act upon his oath, he seems to me to feel this, that he was now about to venture on a serious and hazardous matter. He evidently sets himself as before a business which had its special difficulties. He was high at court, as we may say; for, as we read, the physicians - the state physicians - were his servants (Gen. 50:2). And we know the resources of the kingdom, the strength and wealth of the realm of Egypt, were at that moment under his hand. But still he hesitates about the matter of burying his father in Canaan, and gets the help and intercession of Pharaoh's near kindred.

Why all this? Was it not a small thing for so great a man to do? Yes; but a request to be buried in Canaan was in some sense putting a reproach upon Egypt. It seemed to say, after all, the Canaan of degradation and poverty was better than the Egypt of honor and wealth.

This was the language of Jacob's request; and Joseph felt it to be a serious thing to convey such language to the ear of Pharaoh. But he did. Faith again triumphed. After this manner is he a witness to us, that we should let the world distinctly learn from us that, with all its advance and promise, it is nothing to us while Christ's things though in weakness are our object.

Peace and Not Pieces

If there is one thing this war weary world desires more than any other it is PEACE, but the "way of peace have they not known." In approximately five years since cessation of hostilities of the last great world war the status has been little better than an armed truce, and that broken by incidents of violence and bloodshed. There has been the conquest of all of China by the communist forces; war in Indonesia; civil war in Indo-China; war in Palestine between Jews and Arabs, between Israel and Egypt, between Israel and Trans Jordan; the nations of Central and Southern Europe adjoining or in close proximity to Russia have been seized by that voracious power and made its vassals; troubles in and about Berlin; troubles in many places. And today the whole world is an armed camp, the like of which has never been known before. It is like a powder keg with fuses attached in all directions. As one after another of these fuses becomes ignited the world awaits anxiously to see if the burning fuse will go out or eventually explode the whole keg, thus enveloping the world in another giant catastrophe.

The hostilities began in Korea in June, and it would be folly to predict how far they will yet go. When a fire breaks out there is no telling how much will be destroyed before it is put out. One thing we as Christians need ever to keep before us is that our Father is still supreme and He is overruling all from behind the scenes, and that not one thing can happen without His permission. He may hold back the powers of darkness a little longer, for His people are still in this scene and He cares for them. And yet He may see that it is necessary to allow certain troubles to wean the hearts of His own from this poor world. As bad as this world is, there is always a tendency for Christians to settle down here, and to forget that we are but strangers and pilgrims in it. We become influenced by its ways and its philosophy, and forget that it is stained with the blood of Him who bought us for Himself, of Him whom we love.

In the measure in which we settle down here we forget to watch and wait for our Lord from heaven. This blessed, separating, sanctifying hope becomes obscured by things of sight and sense. This ought not to be. It is strange that we should need to have our hearts forced out of this world by adverse circumstances rather than to have them drawn out by Him who is not here. Much rather we should have our hearts so attached to Him that we would long to see Him face to face, that we should watch day by day for Himself. This was the hope that was placed before the Church in the earliest days, but it was soon forgotten and the world became more attractive. And do we not need to judge ourselves for failure to live in real affectionate hope of His coming?

As for the world, it is hastening onward to destruction as surely as the water above the falls is rushing on to its mad dash over the precipice. The world wants peace, but not God's peace. The "Prince of Peace" came into this world and was cast out; how can men achieve peace which is lasting and real? They would not want to have God interfere with their ways in order to have peace; they would rather have the world with its wars and turmoil than that. They are like the prodigal who said, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me"; he wanted the benefits which the father's goods would secure, but did not want the father's company. Satan is the god and

prince of the world, and men like it that way. He is blinding and deluding people with "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Even the thought of giving up the pleasures and attractions of the world and living only for God and enjoying His company would be intolerable to the unsaved.

May we who are saved bless God that He has opened our blind eyes to see beauty in the Lord Jesus - whom the world cast out - and to enjoy communion with Himself. It is only His grace that has made us any different from those around us. We at one time saw "no beauty [in Him] that we should desire Him." And it is to our shame that the fleeting things of this corrupt scene ever come between our souls and our Savior.

"The night is far spent, and the day is at hand,
No sign to be looked for; the Star's in the sky;
Rejoice then ye saints, 'tis your Lord's own command;
Rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.

"What a day will that be, when the Savior appears!
How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!
A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,
A rich compensation for suff'ring and loss.

"What is loss in this world, when compared to that day -To the glory that then will from heaven be revealed? The Savior is coming,' His people may say;

'The Lord whom we look for, our Sun and our Shield.'

"Oh pardon us, Lord, that our love to Thy name

Is so faint, with so much our affections to move!

Our coldness might fill us with grief and with shame, So much to be loved, and so little to love.

"Oh kindle within us a holy desire

Like that which was found in Thy people of old, Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire, While they waited, in patience, Thy face to behold."

Perfectly Acceptable

I can be before God just as I am; take care not to pass that by. It is a wondrous part of the glory of Christ that a person with sin in him can be in the presence of God in perfect favor. Sin could not be there, but it was all borne by Him who was the accepted sacrifice in His own body on the cross, and put away forever. By faith in Him I am brought into the light with nothing to hide - and I do not want to hide anything.

There is sin and mortality about me, but all that I am cannot separate me from Christ. God says, "He is the accepted sacrifice, and I have nothing to say against you as to all you are in yourself; in Him you are perfectly accepted, the blood cleanseth from all sin." But I have need to be in the light to keep up a walk that becomes such a place. If I turn aside, I shall forget that I am purged from my old sins, and God must come in with a rod. You must keep your walk up by having your eye fixed on Christ.

Plain Infidelity: Modernism

I want a certainty of what God is, to answer the need of my soul. I know what He is by the revelation of Himself in Christ. There I find perfect love to me as a poor sinner, and thus have the possibility of truthfulness and honesty in a sin-conscious soul. There I find a love which is consistent with God's maintaining that absolute righteousness and hatred of sin which my soul has learned He ought, and which my heart (now renewed in knowledge) desires Him, to maintain. In Christ I am (I will not say restored to Him, but) brought to know Him in perfect peace, as nothing else could make me know Him, love Him, walk with Him, as a known God who loves me.

Would I exchange this for the rationalist's [modernist's] aspirations and thoughts of God? Can he give me this? Doubts he can give me (this is easy work), difficulties in Scripture doubtless, uncertainty as to everything I supposed to be truth. Philosophers think they can prove that what has made my heart divinely happy, has made me bless God, because of a goodness I never dreamed of till I knew it in Him; that what has consecrated the lives and hearts of thousands, and changed, where the heart was not consecrated, the whole condition of the world - they think, I say, that all this has been done by a fable, an imposture. Poor human nature!

But perhaps the age is enlightened. Be it so, though in philosophy and moral apprehension it may perhaps be doubted. Millions in previous ages have believed in a revelation - in the revelation which the infidel rejects - enlightened men too, philosophers even.

But why am I to think we are arrived, just in our day, at the perfection of the human mind, so that we are exactly right now? I am told that they were superstitious ages. The age in which Christianity was introduced, or made progress among the Gentiles, was very far otherwise. Witness the various forms of mind, the Philos, the Celsuses, the Porphyries, the Alexandrian School of the Neo-Platonists, the Lucian, and others, whose reputation is publicly known, to say nothing of earlier Grecian philosophy which led the way. But suppose it was superstition; what does that prove but this, that the theory that man's mind is the measure of revelation of what God ought to be, makes truth and error, and the very character which God ought to have, depend on the age a man lives in.

But men, and men of able intellectual minds, have received the revelation which the infidel rejects as being unworthy of God. They have thought it very worthy of Him - have adored the God revealed there as alone worthy of adoration, as supremely worthy. I am not now seeking to prove that they were right. But the fact cannot be denied. They had minds enlarged by stores of knowledge; they were of a philosophical turn of thought; they had considered all, or almost all, the objections of modern infidelity; and in spite of all, they have bowed before the God of the Bible as supremely good, supremely just and wise. The infidel, applying his mind as the measure of it, thinks it all utterly unworthy of the God which his mind has pictured itself-for what other has he?

Prayer and Fasting

Matt. 17:21

It is well when these words express the habit and condition of the soul, and not merely acts resorted to upon some sudden and pressing emergency. They characterize respectively a consciously weak and chastened soul; and in such case, whatever may be the strength of the enemy, or the difficulty of the circumstances, there is certain victory, for the battle is not ours, but the Lord's.

The tone and habit of the soul are of the greatest moment, practically, and with God. It is recorded of Daniel that when he prayed three times a day, contrary to the king's decree, it was "as he did aforetime." (Dan. 6:10).

The Preface to Luke's Gospel: the Critics

There is nothing inconsistent with the thought of inspiration in the full sense of the word in Luke 1:1-4. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

Infidels have asserted that inspiration was not required to record matters of history and biography. In a general sense this may be true, but inspiration insures perfect accuracy in the record, which no unaided historian can afford. But it has been asserted that Luke admits his own non-inspiration. He does nothing of the kind. In these verses we find three sources of information whereby we may know those things that concern the life of our blessed Lord and Savior.

First and foremost there are those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses"; these were the apostles who narrated the facts of our Lord's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, not merely as intelligent men, but as "ministers of the word." In other words, "their oral testimony was inspired."

In the second place, there were those who undertook to set down in writing the things communicated to them by these inspired apostles--things which were received among the Christians with full certainty ("surely believed").

These many writers, while pious in their motives, were nevertheless not inspired writers.

The apostolic oral testimony of verse 2 had given to the many writers of verse 1, and to the whole Christian company of that time, a sure ground of belief. But for the good of the whole Church in all ages something further was needed, and this we have in the four inspired gospels.

Hence we have in the third place the written testimony of Luke (vv. 3, 4), who contrasts

himself with the writers of verse 1, and compares himself with the inspired apostles of verse 2. His motive was not only a pious one, but was divinely directed in its execution, so that believers in all ages might "know the certainty of those things." Luke had what the writers of verse 1 had not; namely, "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Luke, therefore, did not need what the others did before he could write; he did not require to be told the facts by the apostles; he himself had a perfect understanding of every detail from the very commencement. This was a claim to absolute accuracy which could only be by divine inspiration.

A Reader Inquires

ANSWER: The sure mercies of David are mentioned twice: "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure

mercies of David." Isa. 55:3. "And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Acts 13:34, 35.

It is evident from these scriptures that the sure mercies of David are connected with Christ in resurrection. Isa. 53 gives us the rejection of Christ by Israel, His substitutionary work, His resurrection and exaltation; then chapter 54 gives some of the results for Israel, and chapter 55 exhorts and encourages on this groundwork; hence the "sure mercies of David" come in here.

In Acts 13 the same theme is discovered, for the previous verse, the 33rd, tells us that God fulfilled the promises made to the fathers when He raised up Jesus (not "again," but raised Him up by sending Him into this world- incarnation) according to the word in the "second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Then in the 34th verse the Holy Spirit speaks of His being raised up from the dead, "now no more to return to corruption," and quotes Isa. 55:3 about the sure mercies of David to substantiate the unchangeableness of His resurrection and consequent blessing.

The 16th psalm is also called upon to render testimony to this truth: "Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

There is a greater connection between "Thine Holy One" of the 35th verse and the "sure mercies of David" of the 34th verse than appears on the surface. They are practically the same word in the original language. Psalm 89 is a case in point. There in the first verse the psalmist says he will sing of the mercies of Jehovah, and in the 19th verse, "Thou spakest. to [or, of] Thy holy one." The only difference in the Hebrew text between "mercies" of the first verse and "holy" of the 19th verse is that the first is plural and the second singular. Thus all the mercies of God are centered in His Son, the holy, or merciful One. The same connection is to be found in Acts 13 between the "Holy One" of verse 35 and the "mercies" of verse 34.

Therefore, we can conclude that the mercies to Israel based on a Messiah coming through the seed of David were lost when they cried "away with Him" and chose "a murderer and a robber." But God, who foresaw all, promised them "sure" mercies through Him in whom all mercies center, but in Him risen and glorified. So if Israel rejected Christ, and with Him their own blessing, God will bring all to pass without fail in Him whom He raised from the dead, and who will never return to it. The promises of blessing to David through his heir were not sure in the sense that when they came (in the Person of Christ) they were rudely rejected, but they are made sure in Him-David's greater Son -in resurrection. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen"; or, they are affirmed in Him and will all be confirmed in Him (2 Cor. 1:20).

Real Acquaintance With Christ: a Word About Our Hearts

There is a difference between intimacy and familiarity. I may be familiar with the condition and circumstances in which another commonly walks, but have very little real intimacy with himself-as in the case of servants. And this has its strong illustration in the history of the Lord.

The centurion, the Syrophenician, or Mary the sister of Lazarus, were comparatively but little with Him. They are not seen in company with Him wherever He goes, but cross His path, to say the most, only occasionally. But when they are brought to deal with Him, they do so with most bright and blessed intelligence. They show that they know Him-who and what He really is. They make no mistakes about Him, while even the apostles who waited on Him day after day betrayed again and again the ignorance and distance of mere nature.

Is there not a lesson in this for us? Is there not a fear lest familiarity with the things of Christ be much more than the soul's real acquaintance with Himself? I may be often, so to speak, handling these things. I may be reading the books which tell of Him. I may be busy in the activities which make His service their object. I may speak or write about Him, while others, like the centurion, may be a good deal withdrawn from all this; but their growth in divine knowledge and living understanding of Him may be far more advancing. Saul had David about him, even in his household, at his bidding, as his minstrel, when he needed or wished for him; but Saul did not know David.

Surely this is a lesson for us, beloved. The multitude who waited on the Lord, and watched His steps, must have been able to give even Mary of Bethany, had she sought it, much information about Him. Hundreds in the land, as well as the twelve, might have told her what He had been doing, where He had been journeying, the discourses He had delivered, and the miracles He had wrought. Information like this they had in abundance, and she but sparingly, save as she was debtor to them for it. But all that, I need not say, left them far behind her in real acquaintance with Him. And is it not so still? How many of us can give information about the things of Christ, and answer inquiries, correctly too, while the soul of the instructed sits and feasts on the things themselves far more richly. For the knowledge that a Mary may gather from the report of a multitude, or from the lips of the apostles, often becomes another thing with her, than it had previously been with them. A poor stranger, making her modest and yet earnest way to Jesus in the crowd may shame the thoughts of those who were entitled to be the nearest to Him; yes, of Peter himself (see Luke 8:45).

We need not so much to covet information about Him, as power to use divinely what we know- to turn it, through the energy of the Spirit, into a matter of communion, and the feeding and enlivening of our renewed affections. Then, and then only, is it what our God would have it to be. Col. 3:16 may teach us that while inquiring after knowledge, and laying up "the word of Christ," the material of all wisdom, we should take care to nourish the simpler affections of the soul. Melody in the heart should be the companion of the indwelling word of wisdom and knowledge (Eph. 5:19). If it be not, the knowledge will be wanting in its savor, and in its power to refresh either ourselves or others.

This at the same time, let me say, is not to lead us to give up action or, if it may be, daily companionship with the interests and people of Jesus in the world. Perfection is likeness to Himself; and in that living pattern we see this -busy in service wherever or whenever a need called Him, but all the while, in spirit, in the deep sense of the presence of God. Here alone lies the way that is fully according to the Great Original. As one sweetly says, pressing on the soul this grace of communion combined with service-

"Childlike, attend what Thou wilt say,

Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,

Nor leave my sweet retreat."

Real Evidence

A scoffer asked an elderly man,

"How do you know Jesus rose?"

The old saint answered,

"I had an hour with Him this morning."

It is a wonderful thing to know on the authority of the Word of God that the Lord Jesus lives for us now at God's right hand, but it is still more wonderful to enjoy sweet, personal, and intimate communion with Him.

Redemption by Blood: God's Way of Escape

Redemption is directly taught in God's Word for the first time in the story of the Passover. God would have the bondsmen of Egypt His freedmen. Rest had been promised them, the tidings of the pleasant land had been brought them, but not one step toward liberty could the bondsmen take until they were redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb.

Love wafted the gentle tidings of the good land to the fainting slaves, but the stern fact remained unmoved-they were in the land of judgment. Justice had drawn its sword, it exacted its claims against them, and from justice they could not escape.

But the judgment which fell upon Egypt was forestalled for Israel; the blood outside their houses forbade the destroyer entering within. The blood upon lintel and doorposts uttered its voice, and the angel passed over.

There was no escape save by blood. Mercy retired from the land, chased away by the destroyer. Wherever the blood was not, there fell the sword. Whatever house bore not the evidence of having already been under the sentence of judgment, which had not appropriated the blood to its own door, lay under the wrath. Honor, titles, personal worth, were no shield; the sword clave through them all and smote the first-born dead-"From the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon," all perished. The very customs of Egypt augmented the horrors of that night, for at death's entry the living fled from their houses-the women with breasts bared and hair loose, the men wildly crying-all hurrying hither and thither till every street and village in the land echoed with their terror. "There was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

When the day of judgment comes, who shall be able to stand? Who? The great, the mighty, the noble of the earth? Who? The well-disposed, the upright, the moral? They, and they only, who are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Some Israelite might have said, "Show me proof that I am saved. O for evidence that I am among God's people!"

"The blood shall be to you for a token." There is none other granted. Look not for a sign within your breast; see it in the cross of Christ. Look not at your feelings, but at His shed blood. It would not have been faith but disobedience in Israel to have spent their night in inquiring and looking if the blood marks were upon their houses. "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning," God had said. And they sat within and waited for the daybreak. Is that family whose doors are shut, and who assemble in fear and trembling around their paschal lamb, less safe than its neighbors who calmly wait for liberty's coming morn as they keep the feast? Is the first-born of the pale dejected mother less secure than hers whose strong faith in Jehovah already accepts God's freedom? No, it is the blood without the door, not the feelings of them within the house, wherein the safety lies. Faith obeyed God, took the blood and sprinkled it, and in the redeeming blood was the security.

We once bent over a poor dying man and said, "Friend, you are leaving this world. You will very soon appear before God. How is it about your soul? Where are your sins?" He was too weak to lift a finger, but looked up calmly and whispered, "My sins are under the blood."

The poor man had received the truth in the love of it. He had believed what God says respecting the blood of His Son. He rested in this-that God looks upon the sacrifice of His Son, and not upon the sins of those who put their trust in Him.

A Word on the Subject of Repentance

Repentance is that state without which no sinner can be saved, and no wandering saint restored. It is not remorse (this Judas had) which lacks the element of piety. Much less is it a "happy feeling." That even an idolater might enjoy. Nor is it mere sorrow for sin, for millions have regretted their deeds without a trace of repentance toward God. But it is self-judgment according to His Word, and as in His presence. It is not my back turned upon my wicked ways only, but upon myself-a moral revolution.

Read one of the most remarkable instances of repentance on record-"The men of Nineveh... repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matt. 12:41)-as found in Jonah 3. There we see the king coming off his throne when he believed, with his conscience, the message of judgment. In pride of heart all are "kings" till grace restores our eyesight. The king laid aside his robe-self-righteousness. He put on another, of sackcloth- self-abhorrence, which is something more than hating an action. I hate myself for my evil deeds, if in God's presence. Then there was fasting, which is self-denial, and speaks of a condition of soul. Only the Lord Jesus can satisfy a soul in this condition:

"Now naught but Christ can satisfy,

None other name for me;

There's light and life and lasting joy,

Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

The king further told them to "cry mightily unto God," for as yet they knew not His mercy. But one in a state of true repentance will surely have it all out before God. Finally he said, "Let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." This also must surely be. Sin is judged, not justified, and there is "fruit meet for repentance" in turning from the evil.

God did not disappoint them when they turned to Him after this fashion, nor will He disappoint anyone who takes his true place before Him.

The Right Path: a Single Eye

Whatever we have to do in this world - common occupation, business, anything - the great object is to represent Christ. If my soul is knit to Him ("my soul followeth hard after Thee"), I shall measure all my path as to how far I can do justice to Christ. "If... thine eye be single," etc.

There may be a hundred wrong ways, but I must take care to get into the right one. Whether I have made much or little progress as a Christian, I must have Christ my object as the end; Christ will be reflected all down the path and then every step onward will be brighter and brighter. It is not going fast on the road that is the great point, but going always in it (the faster the better, too), "forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14 (N. Trans.). We must have our hearts set upon Christ though, in one sense, not nearer Christ at the end than at the beginning; in another, we are a great deal nearer. The fact of our resurrection is not nearer, but we are nearer in the moral effect of the expectation. Of the Church it is said, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water." In one sense it is perfectly clean, but in another it is getting cleaner through the application, by the Spirit, of the Word to the individual members of Christ's body, and so producing in the whole, moral likeness to the image of Christ. So the outward fact of resurrection is, and may still be, future, but it is the power of the truth of resurrection wrought in his heart that Paul desired.

Righteousness in Putting Away and Power to Restore

There is little power among us to restore because there is want of spirituality and of that love which cares for the members of Christ. There is righteousness, and evil is not allowed. I have not observed any particular defect as to that, but I think the failure is the want of love to the members of Christ and looking after such. The effect at Corinth is given in 2 Corinthians '7:11: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." And when that was so, then he is anxious they should care for this man [the man they were instructed to put away in 1 Cor. 5]. He has been down himself, but he was a member of Christ, and washed in His blood, and they are to take care of him. If the body of Christ and the love of Christ were there, the person, if a Christian, would be miserable until he were received in again.

In this case it was a man broken down with overmuch sorrow. There is no restoration properly, and they were in no state to restore until they hated themselves for their own part in all this. And it is so with us all as principle, though we may have a clearer judgment than another as to how to act. I have no gift myself, I avow, in discipline. I see another thing, that where the general state of any gathering is weak, a person may be left out as a proof of their weakness; for if there were more spiritual power, he would be humbled and brought in. At Corinth, Paul had no occasion to write this until the man was broken down about it himself; nor is it any good to attempt to restore a man until his own soul is really restored. And as to putting out, that may be done as mere bold righteousness. This man, when Paul writes this, was grieving over his sin, and you may say restored in soul, but he was not officially restored. To know when a soul is restored requires spiritual power....

What we need to do is to take the sin of another upon ourselves (like the priest eating the sin offering). If there were power, though we cannot always hinder sins, yet they would be checked. The Corinthians would not act as priests until Paul forced them to it. The assembly should make the sin their own before God; and that is where I have seen a real pastor- wherever there was an evil he would lay it on himself, because he had not looked after such a one enough, or else not rightly.

Righteousness of the Law

Rom. 8:4

This expression, as many of our readers know, has been more exactly given as "the righteous requirement of the law." Taking it so, it has occasioned considerable difficulty from the place in which it is found. The connection shows that it is what is wrought out in the delivered soul - in those who have passed through the experience of chapter 7, and have practically learned that there is now "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," that "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has delivered them from the law of sin and death.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But if we have been delivered from the law, and from efforts to fulfill it, why is it that we are told that the righteous requirement of the law is still fulfilled in us? It is not to be supposed for one moment that the work of the Holy Spirit in us, that the life of the Christian, is now limited by the legal standard; still it is mentioned. The reason for its introduction may be gathered from the preceding chapter. There the standard before the soul was obedience to the law. "The good that I would" is simply this, the righteousness of the law; and hence, after showing the way of deliverance, the Apostle points out that "the good," which could never be attained while under the law, is now reached in a new and better way; that is, what the law required but never obtained is now produced in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. How much more besides, he does not here say.

Sanctification: What Is Sactification?

Sanctification signifies literally a setting apart to God - like a vessel for the use of God in the temple. (See 2 Tim. 2:21.)

The ground of it is the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:29).

The measure of it is the Person of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

The power of it is the Holy Ghost (1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

The application of it is by the Word of God (John 17:17,19).

Sanctification is both positional and practical.

As to position, all believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once (Heb. 10:10).

To all believers, Christ is made unto them sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

All believers have sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2).

All believers are sanctified through the truth (John 17:19).

All believers are sanctified through faith (Acts 26:18).

As to practice, the Apostle desires that the God of peace may sanctify believers wholly (oloteleis); that is, entirely to the end (1 Thess. 5:23).

The will of God was their sanctification, which is divided into four parts:

1. Abstaining from fornication and uncleanness.
2. Positive practical holiness, which is the same word as sanctification in the original language.
3. Love to one another.
4. Orderly walk, and working with their own hands. (1 Thess. 4:3-12.)

The Lord also prays for the believers as to practical sanctification. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17.

The epistle to the Hebrews is the great epistle on sanctification.

The object of the Apostle in writing the epistle was to separate or sanctify the Hebrew Christians from everything to Christ. They were still clinging to Judaism, the Jewish religion, which had just crucified the Lord.

Chapters 1,2, and 3:1,2 show them to be sanctified brethren in association with the Son of God.

Chapters 7, 9, and 10 show them to be sanctified worshipers in association with Christ the glorified High Priest, the center of worship.

In chapter 12 they are disciplined to become partakers of the Father's holiness because they were settling down in the world, and clinging to the earthly religion.

Exhortation - chapter 13:13.

Let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

If a man purge himself from these (that is, vessels of dishonor) he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use (2 Tim. 2:21).

My reader, the first Adam and his descendants have set themselves apart to evil and the rejection of Christ. Christ, the last Adam, set Himself apart from all evil to God, and by His death and resurrection is now fully separated to God. Do you belong to Adam, or to Christ?

A. P. C.

Satan's Attacks on the Truth

When Israel became the depository of the truth that Jehovah alone was God, in contrast to the many false deities of the heathen, Satan came in to corrupt the people and to pull them down. Before long they were forsaking Jehovah their God for "that which doth not profit" (Read Jer. 2:9-13). In like manner, this archenemy set to work early in the Church's history to corrupt the divine revelation of the Trinity - the three Persons of the Godhead, all equal in deity.

Gnosticism, that metaphysical, heterogeneous mixture of errors that flourished in the Near and Middle-East before the Christian era, added a little Christianity as soon as it came in contact with it, and under the enemy's direction, sought to corrupt the early Church.

Much that the Apostle Paul gave in the epistle to the Colossians was to counteract this baneful influence which was then being felt. It was Satan's attack on the truth, and it was directed against the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in Colossians we find such words as these:

"His dear son... who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist [subsist]." Col. 1:13-17.

"For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9.

While this pernicious doctrine especially attacked the Person of the Son, it also corrupted Christianity by teaching that material things were evil and that it was necessary to add to their faith some special separation from nature. To this the Apostle rejoins that "ye are complete in Him," and asks why they were subjecting themselves to human regulations, after the doctrines of men; such restrictions as, "touch not, taste not, handle not." What could be added to that which was complete? complete in Him?

All this goes to prove that if ever so little of that which is derogatory to the blessed Son of God is allowed, the Christian's position and blessing consequently falls.

Timothy was exhorted to avoid "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." 1 Tim. 6:20, 21. This was a warning against the encroachments of the Gnostic pretensions to knowledge - falsely called knowledge. In reality it was only the vain speculations of the mind which is at enmity toward God, which dishonored the Father and the Son, rejected divine revelation, refused what God had given and ordained, under the pretense of special sanctity, but which soon manifested its true character in moral depravity. A word from the pen of Wm. Kelly would be in order here:

"The manner in which God is now and then presented in this epistle [1 Timothy] appears to be directly suited to meet and expose such airy and daring speculations which developed later into all the many vagaries of Gnosticism, sometimes subtle, and bewildering, at others low and licentious, but always destructive delusions."

In 1 Timothy such presentations of God as "incorruptible, invisible, only God" (N. Trans.), who is the creator and preserver of all things, strike at the very root of this Gnostic lie, for in it the finite mind of man sets itself up to judge of "Him with whom we have to do." And the presentation of the Lord Jesus as the one mediator between God and men, who is coming back to show who is the "only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords" undermines all the imaginary structures built on the sand of human competence to judge of that which can only be known by revelation. And if it is known by revelation, then that revelation is to judge men and to be the absolute authority on that of which it speaks, instead of being a subject for human speculation. Thus Gnosticism is displayed as a travesty on real knowledge - it is knowledge, or science, "falsely so called."

Then in the third century the old evil - Zoroastrian dualism - which flourished among the Persians, and had sought to counter the light of Jehovah God, came forward with Christianity added to seduce souls and destroy the faith. This was known as the Manichaeism heresy.

We who live at the end of this era can thank God for having preserved the truth to us in its purity after an almost countless number of attacks upon it. Satan hates Christ and was the behind-the-scenes director of the slaughter of the children in and around Bethlehem in an attempt to destroy Him - The Seed of the woman, who was to bruise the serpent's head. (See Rev. 12:4, 5 to confirm this.)

From the beginning of the Church's history the devil has attacked the truth and those who held it. Witness the persecutions and martyrdoms of the early believers. But like a persecuted Israel in Egypt, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Exod. 1:12.

And when the sword and the stake did not suppress the testimony to Christ, the devil has had his emissaries within the pale of Christendom to attack. There they have propounded every form of evil doctrine, and never more so than at the present time. Their name is legion. Many of the earliest of these heresies are being propagated today, some in new dress and name; but the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who is over all, God blessed forever," is the mark, however it is concealed, at which Satan directs his attacks. And the imbibers of the error are doomed - lost, lost, lost.

May we hold fast the truth as to His deity, the eternity of His being, His creatorial work, His perfect and spotless humanity, and His completed work of redemption; and that we who believe are "complete in Him."

Satan's Delusion

In the February issue we called attention to the way in which Satan deluded men by introducing the worship of many gods (polytheism), and that when God called Abraham and his seed to witness against this evil, Satan was ready with the lie that there were two gods—one of light and the other of darkness. God then spoke through Isaiah the prophet against the devil's falsehood of dualism. Israel's distinct testimony for God, in so far as there was faithfulness, was that Jehovah alone was God -Jehovah being the name by which He had revealed Himself in covenant relationship with Israel.

When we come to the New Testament we find a further revelation of God, for there we find that there are three distinct Persons in the one Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The word "Trinity" has been used to express this blessed truth. That each One of the Persons of the Godhead is God is definitely affirmed in the Scriptures: "My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God," speaks of the Father as God (John 20:17). "This is the true God, and eternal life" is conclusive evidence that the Son is God (1 John 5:20). Many verses speak of the distinctness of the Person of the Holy Spirit and of His deity. In Acts 5 Peter charged Ananias with lying to the Holy Spirit in verse 3, and then in verse 4 says, "thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Of whom but God could it be said that He (the Holy Spirit) divides to every man severally as He will (1 Cor. 12:11)?

While there are intimations in the Old Testament that there are three Persons in the Godhead, it was not really disclosed until the baptism of the Lord Jesus—the Son—in the Jordan River. At that time the heavens were opened on that fair Object on earth, and the Father spoke to the Son, saying, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Mark 1:10, 11; Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:22).

Then in connection with the ministry of the Son on earth it is said that He did the works ("the same works that I do," John 5:36), and that the Father also was engaged in those works ("the

Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works," John 14:10), and the Son said that He cast out demons "by the Spirit of God" (Matt. 12:28). And from the moment that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son as man (Luke 3:22) He remained with Him, and all that the Son did was in the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:1 and 14). All of the Persons of the Godhead were actively engaged in the mission of the Son on this earth. What a wonder! what manifold grace! that the Godhead should be concerned in reaching down to poor fallen creatures.

Even the parables bear witness to the unity of purpose and operation of the Godhead in the salvation of the lost. In Luke 15 the shepherd represents the Son going after the lost ones, the woman pictures the Spirit of God sweeping, stirring up, and bringing in light into dead souls, and the father beautifully depicts the Father joyfully welcoming home the lost ones.

This same joint action is seen in connection with the work of the atonement, for the Father sent the Son to be the Savior (1 John 4:10, 14), and Heb. 10 tells us of the will of God, and the work of

Christ (the Son), and the testimony of the Holy Spirit (vv. 10, 15). Oh, marvel of marvels, that we should be the objects of such thoughts, counsels, purposes, and work!

We find the Godhead also acting in connection with the resurrection of the Son. It is said that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4), and that the Son laid down His life and took it again (John 10:17, 18), and that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection" (Rom. 1:4),

Then after the resurrection the Lord Jesus gave instructions regarding baptism saying that it was to be done "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19.

When the Son ascended as the glorified Man to God's right hand He received from the Father (Acts 2:33) the Holy Spirit, and sent Him into the world (John 16:7) to convict the world "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (v. 8), and to baptize the believers into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), and to dwell in them individually (1 Cor. 6:19) and collectively (1 Cor. 3:16).

Nor is that all; for we now have access through Him (the Son) by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18). Scriptures might be multiplied showing the unity of purpose and action of the Godhead in the work of grace.

This revelation of the Trinity was obstinately refused by the Jews, although the Old Testament, which they professed to believe and honor, intimated it; for instance, the very first verse of Genesis 1 was an enigma until this light shone upon it. "In the beginning God created" as written in the Hebrew language has a plural noun (Elohim) combined with a singular verb (created). The inference very plainly is that Elohim includes the different Persons of the Godhead, and the singular verb indicates their acting as one in creation. (We should note, however, that when the creation is attributed to any one Person of the Godhead in particular it is to the Son [Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2]). The same thing is also seen in connection with the creation of man. In Gen. 1:26 we read, "And God [Elohim] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

The day is coming soon when Satan will have another counterfeit with which to oppose the Trinity of the Godhead. He will himself head up a trinity of evil. He will give his power to the coming head of the revived Roman Empire (called in Scripture "the beast"), and together they will work with the apostate head of Israel in the land of Palestine (the false prophet that speaks lies) in a last desperate attempt to frustrate God's purposes concerning His King in Zion.

In one sense the false prophet is called the antichrist, but in another sense the whole wicked triumvirate will be anti (or, against) Christ-Christ in His threefold character of prophet, priest, and king. The head of the Jewish state will be "anti-prophet," for he will speak lies and perform lying wonders; the head of the Roman confederacy will be anti-king, for he will be the ruler who will exercise great power and defy God and His Christ; and the devil himself is anti-priest, for he is the accuser of the brethren, and at that time he will throw his power into the fight against the remnant who fear God.

But all the power and wit of man and devil shall not avail, for Christ will come at the appointed hour and cast the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), and the devil will be cast into the bottomless pit for one thousand years, after which he will also be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet will still be (Rev. 20:1,3, 10). All the might of the darkness of

this world must give way before Him when He comes to make His enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1), and He must reign until He shall have put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25). And to think, He will associate us who believe on Him in the day of His rejection with Himself in that day when He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9; Rev. 2:27)!

"Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray-

That prospect bright, unfailing;

Where God shall shine in light divine,

In glory never fading."

Self-Judgment: a Needed and Wholesome Exercise

There are few exercises more valuable or healthful for the Christian than self-judgment. I do not mean by this the unhappy practice of looking in upon oneself for evidences of life and security in Christ. This is terrible work. To be looking at a worthless self, instead of at a risen Christ, is as deplorable an occupation as we can well conceive. The idea which many Christians seem to entertain, in reference to what is called self-examination, is truly depressing. They look upon it as an exercise which may end in their discovering that they are not Christians at all. This, I repeat it, is most terrible work.

No doubt it is well for those who have been building upon a sandy foundation, to have their eyes opened to see the dangerous delusion. It is well for such as have been complacently wrapping themselves up in pharisaic robes, to have those robes stripped off. It is well for those who have been sleeping in a house on fire, to be roused from their slumbers. It is well for such as have been walking blindfolded to the brink of some frightful precipice, to have the bandage removed from their eyes so that they may see their danger, and retreat. No intelligent and well regulated mind would think of calling in question the rightness of all this. But then, fully admitting the above, the question of true self-judgment remains wholly untouched. The Christian is never once taught in the Word of God to examine himself with the idea of finding out that he is not a Christian. The very reverse is the case, as I shall endeavor to show.

There are two passages in the New Testament which are sadly misinterpreted. The first is in reference to the, celebration of the Lord's supper: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [judgment] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. 11:28, 29. Now, it is usual to apply the term "unworthily," in this passage, to persons doing the act, whereas, it really refers to the manner of doing it. The Apostle never thought of calling in question the Christianity of the Corinthians; no, in the opening address of his epistle he looks at them as "the church of God which is at Corinth... sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (or saints by calling). How could he use this language in the first chapter, and in the eleventh chapter call in question the worthiness of these saints to take their seat at the Lord's supper? Impossible. He looked upon them as saints and, as such, he exhorted them to celebrate the Lord's supper in a worthy manner. The question of any but true Christians being there is never raised; so that it is utterly impossible that the word "unworthily" could apply to persons. Its application is entirely to the manner. The persons were worthy, but their manner was not; and they were called as saints to judge themselves as to their ways, else the Lord might judge them in their persons, as was already the case. In a word, it was as true Christians they were called to judge themselves. If they were in doubt as to that, they were utterly unable to judge anything. I never think of setting my child to judge as to whether he is my child or not; but I expect him to judge himself as to his habits, else if he do not, I may have to do, by chastening, what he ought to do by self-judgment. It is because I look upon him as my child that I will not allow him to sit at my table with soiled garments and disorderly manners.

The second passage occurs in 2 Cor. 13 "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me... Examine yourselves" vv. 3-5. The rest of the passage is parenthetical. The real point is this: the Apostle appeals to the Corinthians themselves as the clear proof that his apostleship was divine-that Christ had spoken in him-that his commission was from heaven. He looked upon them as true Christians, notwithstanding all their confusion; but, inasmuch as they were seals to his ministry, that ministry must be divine and, hence, they ought not to listen to the false apostles who were speaking against him. Their Christianity and his apostleship were so intimately connected that to question the one was to question the other. It is, therefore, plain that the Apostle did not call upon the Corinthians to examine themselves with any such idea as that the examination might issue in the sad discovery that they were not Christians at all. Quite the reverse. In truth, it is as if I were to show a real watch to a person and say, "Since you seek a proof that the man who made this is a watchmaker, examine it."

Thus then it seems plain that neither of the above passages affords any warrant for that kind of self-examination for which some contend, which is really based upon a system of doubts and fears, and has no warrant whatever in the Word of God. The self-judgment to which I would call the reader's attention is a totally different thing. It is a sacred Christian exercise of the most salutary character. It is based upon the most unclouded confidence as to our salvation and acceptance in Christ. The Christian is called to judge self,

because he is, and not to see if he be, a Christian. This makes all the difference. Were I to examine self for a thousand years, I should never find it to be aught else than a worthless, ruined, vile thing a thing which God has set aside, and which I am called to reckon as "dead." How could I ever expect to get any comfortable evidences by such an examination? Impossible. The Christian's evidences are not to be found in his ruined self, but in God's risen Christ; and the more he can get done with the former and occupied with the latter, the happier and holier he will be. The Christian judges himself, judges his ways, judges his habits, judges his thoughts, words, and actions, because he believes he is a Christian, not because he doubts it. If he doubts, he is not fit to judge anything. It is as knowing and enjoying the eternal stability of God's grace, the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus, the all-prevailing power of His advocacy, the unalterable authority of the Word, the divine security of the very feeblest of Christ's sheep-it is as entering, by the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, into these priceless realities, that the true believer judges himself. The human idea of self-examination is founded upon unbelief. The divine idea of self-judgment is founded upon confidence.

But let us never forget that we are called to judge ourselves. If we lose sight of this, nature will soon get ahead of us, and we shall make sorry work of it. The most devoted Christians have a mass of things which need to be judged and if they are not habitually judged they will assuredly cut out abundance of bitter work for them. If there be irritability or levity, pride or vanity, natural indolence or natural impetuosity whatever there be that belongs to our fallen nature, we must, as Christians, judge and subdue that thing. That which is abidingly judged will never get upon the conscience. Self-judgment keeps all our matters right and square; but if nature be not judged, there is no knowing how, when, or where, it may break out and produce keen anguish of soul and bring gross dishonor upon the Lord's name. The most grievous cases of failure and declension may be traced to the neglect of self judgment in little things.

All this is deeply practical and soul-subduing. May all the Lord's people learn to walk in the cloudless sunshine of His favor, in the holy enjoyment of their relationship, and in the habitual exercise of a spirit of self-judgment!

Seven Hints: an Open Letter to Young Christians

Beloved in the Lord,

If you have been led by the Holy Ghost to own the Lord Jesus as your Savior, allow me to exhort you in some particulars.

Let Him, not the instrument used for your blessing, have all the praise, for He alone is worthy, and His servants would be "carnal" indeed (1 Cor. 3:1.9) if they allowed you to think of them, when the praise and adoration belong only to Him.

You have been led to see that you know very little of God's Word - so all of us should candidly admit (1 Cor. 8:2). Then search daily to find in the Scriptures a deeper acquaintance with the Person to whom you are brought. You know what the work has done for your conscience; now learn about the divine

Object for your heart. In this day of confusion and lawlessness the saint of God needs, as ever, to be commended "to God, and to the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32).

Loud talking and much disputing ill become followers of Jesus in this day. A quiet consistent walk in whatever relationship of life we are found will weigh much more heavily (1 Pet. 2:12).

Make it a habit when you meet together to avoid the gossip tendency of the day. The Person of the Christ, as shown to faith by the Holy Ghost in the Word, should be the only theme. This will exclude slander on the one hand, and creature worship on the other.

5. Next to thus living consistently before your relatives, persevere in prayer to God (Eph.

6:18) for them, and watch for a favorable opportunity to speak to them. This needs wisdom (Isa. 50:4; Pro. 15:23).

Wait on the Lord to enlarge your hearts toward unconverted persons. To such as you know, watch your opportunity to commend a good gospel tract or book. Respecting this you should feel it your privilege to lay by, as the Lord prospers you, for the scattering of what you believe, according to God's Word, is the truth to help souls. So also, instead of wasting money on needless things, look after the poor - especially those who are the Lord's (1 Timothy

6:17-19).

I would lastly add that you should most earnestly find out what is the mind of the Lord respecting you in these last days. To gather round men - to aid in schism - would be simply to go counter to the truth in John 17, Eph. 4 Cor. 12, etc. If you are willing to do what is right, the Lord will make plain your path (Phil. 3:13-21). But surely every saint of God should feel that the present condition of the Church - God's Church - on the earth is anything but what it was when

All were of one heart and soul

And love to Christ inspired the whole;

when no names, and sects, and parties, severed practically, as to outward testimony, the "one body."

May abundant grace, mercy, and peace be yours, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours truly in Him,

She Could Not Be Hid: Zipporah and Asenath

Eph. 3:9

At times the silence or secrecy of Scripture is most beautiful. This has been observed as to the genealogy of Melchisedec. Indeed, the Spirit Himself has so referred to it in Hebrews 8. But the same thing occurred to me a day or two ago as to Zipporah in Exod. 18

We know that the meeting of the Gentile family there with the Israel of God on the mount is the type of the communion of the heavenly and earthly families in the coming days of the glory. But having accomplished this purpose, Zipporah is seen and heard no more. She retires, she shrinks, as it were, instinctively into the shade, and from that moment disappears. This is surely like everything perfect in its place because, though in the old dispensation the heavenly family might show itself for a moment, or flit across the scene, yet they were not to be detained, or occupy the foreground, for more than an instant. They might glow for the twinkling of an eye, but then they must vanish into heaven. And so with the Gentile wife of Moses, the type of the heavenly bride - she glitters before the eye just as it were to awaken inquiry after the mysterious stranger, or to attract with a sudden brightness beyond the common measure, or out of the way, and then she retreats. (Asenath, Joseph's wife, in like manner appears for a little moment to serve as a beam of heavenly light [Gen. 41], and then vanishes, for she was also a type of the Church.) She could not but be hid. The Church, the heavenly bride, was still a mystery.

I might say the two appearances of Zipporah have this character. She appears for a moment when Israel had rejected Moses, but disappears as soon as Moses begins to act again for Israel (Exod. 2; 4), and reappears only on Israel's redemption and arrival at the mount of God. The first of these short visions of this Gentile bride presented the Church, or heavenly family, as now gathered during Israel's unbelief; the second presented her as by-and-by glorified, while Israel is saved and blessed. Is not her zeal against circumcision a pattern? (See Exod. 4:25; Gal. 5:4.)

Stirring up in These Last Days

Many of our editorials of the past two years have alluded to the increasingly serious character of the times in which we are living. They are marked by conditions that surely should awaken unbelievers to a sense of their need of a Savior, and stir up all Christians to a more faithful and devoted living for Christ. The world has never before witnessed such preparations for catastrophe as now. Men in their blindness are marching steadily forward to a mad, horrible climax.

Terrible as was the atom bomb, this was not fully realized by men in general. Now comes the prospect of a hydrogen bomb which is variously estimated to have destructive power all the way up to one thousand times greater than its predecessor. Its lingering death-dealing radioactivity would make large sections uninhabitable. Science has been able to create in an atomic explosion the tremendously high heat of the sun's burning so that it is now thought possible to use that heat to set off the lighter elements of hydrogen and helium. One might be inclined to say, "What bath man wrought!" But how much more appropriate to apply the words of Hosea, by the Spirit of God, to Israel, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." They by their own doings had brought about their destruction; and what shall we say of mankind? of science? Is there not a parallel?

It should be noted that these tremendous developments in death-making devices have only been possible by the efforts of the men of science, men of giant intellects, and of great learning. (Their achievements have not, of course, been limited to ways and means of destruction; they have made life more pleasant for sin ruined mankind in many ways.) But with all their natural ability and acquired skill, these men have been noted as a class for their daring infidelity. They have scoffed at the God of the Bible, ridiculed inspiration, derided the account of creation, and substituted the vain hypothesis of evolution for a sure foundation; and withal, they have had the effrontery to inculcate their shocking unbelief in the minds of the younger generations who have sought wisdom at their mouths. In short, God has been shut out of His own creation by His own creatures whom He had endowed with those very intellects. Surely it is true that "the world by wisdom knew not God. (We must add, however, that there have been notable exceptions to this rule of blind infidelity among men of great learning.)

Now would it be any wonder if God would allow His puny creatures who have despised and slighted Him to finally wreak havoc and destruction on themselves through the very ability of which they boasted, and which their fellow men lauded and acclaimed? It is not a flattering picture of man that Zophar the Naamathite gave long years ago: "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Job 11:12. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," but, alas, they have not known that, and in the end it will be discovered that there is no true wisdom where the fear of the Lord is not. Although success may attend their research, everything is basically wrong when built on the wrong foundation. The fear of God which leads to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only sure foundation; everything else is sinking sand.

But shall we decry these men of science as though we who trust in the living God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are better? Ah, no. For "such were some of you" (1 Cor. 6:11). "For we were

once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error." Titus 3:3 (N. Trans.). Let us rather praise God that He opened our once-blind eyes and gave us to believe His Word and find our treasure in Christ Jesus our Lord; but let us keep a clear perspective of the world and its present state, and of its coming doom.

The portents of our day are ominous, but let us neither faint nor be weary. We are the children of God - the God who is still above all - and not one thing can happen to one of His own without His permission. He may hold back the awful cataclysm while the Church is here, as He held back the liquid fire from Sodom while Lot was in it. The world is fast ripening for judgment as a wheat field ripens for the reapers, but we need to remember that every one of His own is dear to Him. If in His wisdom He should allow some to be snatched away instantly to be with Christ, by any catastrophe, it would only be to be suddenly with Christ which is far better. Nothing can ever touch the believer's life which is hid with Christ; and nothing in heaven, earth, or hell can ever sever him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Col. 3:3; Rom. 8:38, 39).

And one thing is certain, the coming of the Lord is not far off. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior for our bodies. Very soon now we shall hear His shout and be changed and caught up to meet our Lord in the air.

But what manner of persons ought we to be while left here? Should we look or act like the world which is madly going down hill to destruction? What kind of conduct became Noah while he built his ark according to divine directions? Would it not have ill become him to have enjoyed the world's pleasures and acted as though all was well with them, when he knew what was coming? He preached righteousness and warned of judgment to come. He lived in a serious time when it was all-important that he should render faithful testimony to God before a very wicked generation. He had the divine testimony and was responsible for it before the world; and so have you and I, fellow Christian. The present religious exterior - the "form of godliness" - has not changed this. We are here to represent our absent Lord and to warn of judgment to come, and part of our testimony should be negative; that is, it should consist of separation from the world - its pleasures, aims, politics, schemes, etc. Sometimes a negative testimony is a very powerful one.

When the prophet of Judah was sent to Bethel to testify for God against the idolatry practiced there, he was neither to eat bread nor drink water in that place (1 Kings 13). His testimony was partly in the negative form by entire separation from everything there. This is always resented by the world (and often by worldly-minded Christians) and every effort is made by them to have a faithful Christian relax his entire separation. The prophet of Judah learned this to his ruin.

Testimony in Life and Speech

"Let your light SO SHINE before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5:16.

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and SO SPAKE, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." Acts 14:1.

Oh! how this little word "so shine" should echo in our hearts. Once we were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord, and so the Lord says to us, "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). May the fruit of the light be seen in us as the blessed traits of our Lord and Savior are produced in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have we not desired that we might "so speak" that some might believe? It is interesting to notice Acts 14:3 in connection with the speaking in Iconium: "A considerable time therefore they stayed, speaking boldly in reliance on the Lord, that gave witness unto the word of His grace." (W. Kelly Trans.) Here is a thought we ever need to have before us if we desire to so speak that souls may be blessed - it must be in reliance on the Lord. Dependence is that which should mark us, and in this connection it is interesting and profitable that we should think of the perfect Servant - the Lord Jesus - here in this world. Even His enemies had to confess that "never man spake like this Man"; literally, "never man so spake as this Man." Oh, how true this was! In Him the weary found rest, for He knew how to speak a word in season to such.

In Isa. 50 we are told the way the perfect Servant lived. "The Lord GOD bath given Me the tongue of the learned [learner or disciple, as chapter 8:16], that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned [learner]." It is wonderful to think of the dependence of the Lord Jesus as man here in this world. He spent whole nights in prayer to God. What an example He gives us! May we know more of what this dependence is. May we be found feeding upon His Word morning by morning that we may know how to speak.

Those Present at the Institution of the Remembrance: a Reader Inquires

ANSWER: A careful investigation will disclose that Judas was not present when the Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, and gave it to the apostles in remembrance of Himself in death, and then gave them the cup in remembrance of His blood shed for them.

Judas was present at the keeping of the Passover feast just prior to it, and engaged in the conversation at the table about who was to betray the Lord. John, who records the Passover but not the Lord's supper, tells us that the Lord Jesus took a morsel, or piece of bread, and dipped it in broth or juice and gave it to Judas. This was an act of favor by a host to a special guest (which Judas accepted), and was connected with the Passover and not the Lord's supper. John then records that when Judas had received the sop he went out "immediately" (John 13:30).

A comparison with Mark 14 will confirm that Judas was present at the Passover supper where the Lord told them of His coming betrayal (vv. 12-21). Then in verses 22 to 25 we have the account of the Lord's supper as separate and distinct from, and later than, the Passover. Mark does not tell us when Judas left the company, but it is evident that he did sometime, for in the 43rd verse he comes to betray Jesus. John supplies the information as to when he went out.

A check with Matt. 26 will show the same order (vv. 17-25 giving the Passover and the conversation) with the Lord's supper following the Passover (vv. 26-28). Matthew likewise does not name the time of Judas's departure, but tells of his coming back.

Now, lest anyone suggest that Luke affirms that Judas was present at the Lord's supper, let us look at Luke 22. This inspired writer gives an account of the Passover in verses 7 to 18; then in verses 19 and 20 he gives the institution of the Lord's supper: he then goes back in verses 21 to 23 to tell about the conversation which had previously taken place at the Passover about who would betray the Lord. This last is coupled with the strife among the rest regarding who was to be the

greatest, followed by Simon Peter's display of self-confidence. This is in keeping with the Spirit's design in Luke's gospel where actual chronological order gives way to a moral order.

In Luke 22 the Lord's desire to keep the Passover with them is expressed, and then His desire that they should remember Him in death is put next; after that we find the state of Judas brought forward, then of the eleven, and then of Peter. The expressions of the Lord's heart are put together, and then, in sad contrast, the states of all those who had accompanied Him in His ministry are placed side by side. What a contrast! Such is our blessed Lord, and such is man.

This same departure from sequence is seen in other places in Luke's gospel; for instance, in the temptations of the Lord by Satan. Luke places them in order of severity and gives the hardest (the religious one) last, although it was actually earlier. This method of dealing with subjects is not uncommon even in the writings of men, and in the inspired gospel it marks perfection in details.

We have gone into this matter rather lengthily because an understanding of it enhances the beauty of the inspired accounts and, further, to offset the mistaken teaching that affirms Judas was present at the Lord's supper as a reason why other Judases should be permitted to partake of that blessed memorial of our Lord in death. We quote the words of a poet:

"None but believers should break bread,

For none but them do know

That for their sins Christ died and bled,

And why His death they show."

Even in the low state that existed in Corinth it is not supposed that unbelievers were present and partook of the Lord's supper. The Corinthians had forgotten the true character of it, and were eating of that blessed memorial as though it were a common meal. The Apostle by the Spirit writes in the 11th chapter of the first epistle to correct their errors. and then admonishes them to examine themselves - to judge themselves - before partaking of it. There is not the slightest thought of examining themselves to see if they were Christians or not, but to examine their ways and to judge all that was inconsistent with Him whom they remembered, so that they did not come together "for the worse."

Three Persons of the Godhead Denied

The daring speculations of Gnosticism caused much trouble in the early Church. They perverted the pure gospel, and sought to undermine the blessed truth of the Trinity, especially attacking the deity of the Son. Numerous other evils followed, including the Manichean heresy in the third century; but it remained for the fourth century to witness the worst and most serious attack of all. This assault on the truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ came more from within the pale of the professing church than had any previous one. It was propounded by a man whose name was Arius of the city of Alexandria, Egypt; he was known as a presbyter in the church there, and before long his heterodoxy had spread and caused division and grief in every quarter. But let us look at the moment chosen of the devil to let loose this deadly attack.

The emperor Constantine had ascended the throne of the Roman Empire in 312 A. D. and in March of the following year he issued an edict giving to Christians full religious toleration. From that point the fusion of state and church accelerated rapidly, and before long they were fully entwined. Church leaders were present at state affairs, and state officials presided at church councils. Prior to this time the church had been free and independent of the government. Its authority was from the Lord in heaven and it made its way (not with, but) against a hostile heathen government. Ten different times the devil had stirred up the whole Roman Empire to suppress, and if possible exterminate, all profession of faith in Christ. Thousands upon thousands of Christians had died under every form of atrocity that worshipers of demon-backed idols could invent. But now all was changed and Satan had transformed himself for the present from a roaring lion to an angel of light. As with the stroke of a pen, of a man who soon assumed to be the head of the church while at the same time he was official high priest of the heathen, all was reversed and it became expedient to profess Christianity if one wanted to advance in the world. Under this artificial stimulation an abundant crop of tares grew apace in the wheat field. Mere professors now swelled the ranks everywhere.

It was at this propitious time that the enemy launched a blasphemous attack against the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there were enemy-implemented agents to take up the wicked doctrine and carry it far and wide.

The impious teaching of Arius denied to both the Son and to the Holy Spirit "true, proper, essential, and eternal deity." It made the blessed Son of God to be only the highest of created beings, and not Himself the eternal God. How like the devil's enmity against the Seed of the woman is this attack. Of course the enemy could not alter the fact of His deity, but by denying it he could bring dishonor to that peerless One who is worthy of all homage, and by seducing fallen men with it he could ensure their eternal damnation. Truly he is "a liar" and "a murderer from the beginning."

But God had foreseen such attacks and had most carefully guarded the eternal deity of Christ in many places in both the Old and New Testaments. Think of such a verse as this:

"For unto us [Israel] a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isa. 9:6. Many other Old Testament scriptures bear the same witness. Then in the New Testament, can anything exceed the fullness and beauty of John 1:1.3?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him."

Here it is plainly stated that He was there in the beginning; He was not created but, go back as far as you will, He was there. He was a distinct Person in the Godhead, for He was with God. He was Deity Himself, for He was God. In the Greek there is no article before that last word "God." It does not say He was "the" God, for that would exclude the Father and the Holy Spirit, but He Himself was God, leaving full room for the Father and the Spirit who were also God. Nor does it say that He was "a" God, for that would be a flat denial of His own essential deity. "He was God," not "a" God, although modern wicked cults pervert this verse to make it say He was only "a" God. One of these cults has even gone so far as to put out a supposed translation of the Bible (the Concordant) in which they give both Greek and English with this false rendering. It is surely nothing less than the work of the enemy who sowed this seed in the days of Constantine.

A well-known writer has said: "Rom. 9:5 is a rich and precise expression of Christ's underivative and supreme Godhead, equally with the Father and the Spirit. 'Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.' The efforts of the heterodox critics bear witness to the all-importance of the truth, which they vainly essay to shake by unnatural efforts which betray the dissatisfaction of their authors. There is no such emphatic predication of supreme deity in the Bible; not of course that the Father and the Holy Spirit are not co-equal, but because the humiliation of the Son in incarnation and the death of the cross made it fitting that the fullest assertion of divine supremacy should be used of Him."

Satan chose his man with skill equal to that used in selecting the time for the dissemination of this daring blasphemy. Arius possessed many natural qualities that would gain friends and influence people; he had a very attractive personality, and led a strict and blameless life, and had a rather humble exterior under which he hid his personal vanity and ambition. A man without these advantages would not have suited the enemy's designs, and we need to remember the same is true today. There are many "antichrists" abroad today who deny the Father and the Son, and many of them have lovely exteriors, and smooth words and fair speeches with which to deceive the hearts of the simple. It is a fact that their number has increased according to that word to Timothy: "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:13.

Let us not stop with reading about the deceivers; the next verses contain a word of encouragement and exhortation: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Yes, "continue THOU." There can never be a sufficient reason to give up. Evil men may get worse and worse; fellow-Christians may become weary and discouraged; nevertheless, "continue thou." What a word to each one of us individually! And let us remember too that the Holy Scriptures are the solid rock upon which we stand, and that neither man nor demon can ever shake them. They are our resource in a day of infamy, and they can not only make us wise unto salvation but fully equip each of us for every good work.

Translation of the Bible

The truth is that there is no security even in the most accurate and comprehensive scholarship without the teaching of the Spirit, if the subject matter be the Scriptures. Christian translators may often fail through ignorance of idiom; but a worldly scholar never can be trusted at all, spite of consummate linguistic skill, because of his necessary lack of still deeper qualifications. He knows not God and His Son, and has not therefore the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the intelligence of the truth. W.K.

True Love

Our blessing all depends on the... sufferings of Christ. No thoughts of God's love are to be allowed which would interfere with the demands of His righteousness. The love is without measure. That is true. But it is not a mere emotion. It is that which, at an unutterable cost, provided redemption for the guilty. And if we think of love without believing the provision that it made for the claims and exactions of righteousness, we are dealing with a mere sentiment of our own mind, and not with the revelation of God. And poor are the best conceptions of man's religion - something different indeed from the moral grandeur and perfections of the gospel of Christ, where God is just while He justifies the sinner, where we learn that He has brought back His banished ones, and received His prodigals, all the while upholding the full glories of His throne of righteousness, and providing in and from Himself an answer to all its demands. The cross of Christ is the secret and center of all this.

Truth for the Times

It is worthy of remark that the moment you get out of the epistles to the churches, you get catholic [or, general] epistles and others which treat the Church as in the "last days." In John there were many antichrists. In Peter, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." In 1 Timothy, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith." In 2 Timothy, "In the last days perilous times shall come." In Jude, "Certain men are crept in unawares." In 2 Peter, "There shall be false teachers among you."

It is at such a time that God specially commends us to His Word; and He has taken care that we should have in Scripture what would guide us in the last days, when He commends us to it. After Paul's departure grievous wolves would come in, not sparing the flock. He commends us to God and the word of His grace. (Acts 20. See also 2 Tim. 3:14,17.) We need the grace of endurance in such a day. And when one goes through the trial with God beforehand, he meets the enemy and the actual trial when it comes, and the distressing effect upon the heart is gone. God helps and sustains us in it and through it.

One is struck in reading the second epistle to Timothy, by the way in which Paul goes back from dispensational glory (as in Ephesians, etc.) down to natural and Jewish relationships of private and personal character: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience," and "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice."

There is nothing he insists on more than not to lose personal courage in a time of ruin, no matter how great the ruin may be: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is always thus. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries." "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord [that is, the gospel and the testimony generally], nor of me His prisoner." Satan is to be met with confidence as a beaten enemy. This gives steady firmness to the soul. One has the truth, and knows one has it; and this gives quiet consciousness, and keeps one in the midst of the attacks of the enemy in an evil day. He is to be thoroughly courageous when all the evil was coming in, and was there; to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; to "endure hardness." It was when the power of evil had come in that he expects courage.

This is not the tide of blessing which carries on others; but the ebb had come, and individuals were standing and stemming it, and carrying on the testimony of the truth. It was not like the tide of the gospel at the first when "a great door and effectual... opened," but rather "be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." It is then we require the power of God and personal courage more than ever. All this is "truth for the times" in which we live. (There is truth for eternity as well.) Chapter 1:9, 10: "Not according to our works"; that is, our responsibility. The history of the responsible man ended with the cross. There atonement was made, and God's eternal purposes came out. The cross maintained the responsibility of man and the authority of God. Through it we get out by redemption into the state where it was His purpose and grace to put

us before the world began. The Church has nothing to do with this earth except to go through it.

The tide of the gospel had gathered a crowd of people into this wonderful calling, but the tide began to ebb, and all were going back again (chap. 1:15). Positive power is needed in such a time, as well as having the truth. There are two things that are worthy of notice: first, that we now have only the power of good in the midst of evil, but the evil is never set to rights till the Lord comes; and the instant the power of good is not there, you get away down the stream; and second, how the good that God set up failed so fast. But this has always been so. The counsels of God as to what He set up were made known, and the power of evil came in at once to frustrate the counsels.

Verse 12. "For the which cause," etc. He was a prisoner for having carried the testimony to the Gentiles. But he had entrusted his happiness to Christ, and He would keep it for him against that day.

In verses 13 and 14 he passes on the testimony to Timothy who would commit "the truth" to faithful men who could teach it to others. The Church had ceased to be a guarantee for the "the truth"; that is, the doctrines of Christianity and of Christ.

Defection was the order of the day (see chapter 1:15), and in view of such, as of the general state of things, Timothy was to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The Apostle now takes up the case of a soldier, an athlete, and a husbandman. He must not be entangled with the affairs of this life, but be entirely at the disposal of Him who had called him to be a soldier. Striving in the games, he must do so lawfully; and laboring first, be a partaker of the fruits of it.

Paul's gospel and Paul's doctrine are positive things for the last days. We are walking and laboring in the midst of an immense network of systems in which Paul's ministry is totally unknown. For it he suffered as an evildoer unto bonds.

How like to Christ's own words are those of the Apostle in verse 10 of chapter 2!

We now get corruption of doctrine (chapter 2:16, etc.). There had been falling away. Thus (v. 19) individual responsibility (coupled with God's faithful knowledge of His own) to depart from iniquity. In verse 20 we have ecclesiastical apprehension.

Supposing a person says, "I do not see that so and so is wrong," when Scripture forbids it; this, those walking in the truth cannot allow. You cannot take the conscience of the individual for the rule of the Church. Scripture is its guide. Thus we have to walk with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. At the beginning of Christianity we did not find this expression. It was more general - "all that... call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Now it is all "that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." The Church should have been the witness for the glory of Christ on high, and is now mixed up with all that witnesses against Him here below.

In chapter 2, verse 24, "patient" should be "forbearing." "In meekness setting right those who oppose" (see N. Trans.) that they might be recovered to God's will from the snares of the devil.

The profession of Christianity has become the reproduction under the name of Christ, of all the horrors and wickedness of heathenism. (Compare chapter 3:1-4 with Rom. 1:29-31.)

We are never able to judge rightly as to what we have to do and to meet in the last days unless we are conscious that we have to do with Satan's power actually; the "Jannes and Jambres" referred to were mere instruments of Satan. But their folly will be shown up, perhaps now, perhaps by and by.

The expression "silly women" is applicable to men of effeminate mind as well as to women. It is the turn and bent of the mind of the persons who are thus beguiled.

We here get Paul's doctrine (v. 10) and the manner of life which flowed from it. "Thou hast fully known"; that is, had perfect understanding of it. It is a like expression to that in Luke 1:3: "Having had perfect understanding," etc. He had fully followed up his teaching, as having learned it thoroughly. The manner of life goes with it.

In verse 12 the emphasis is on "godly"; they will suffer. Things would get worse and worse. It was the old story with the world - either deceiving itself or being deceived.

He now casts us upon Scripture specially. In verse 15 it is the Old Testament scriptures which Timothy had known. In verse 16 he embraces "all Scripture. Scripture is the point - that which was written. Peter stamps Paul's writings with the authority of the other scriptures. He says they are Scripture (see 2 Pet. 3:16). The man who could do this was conscious he was writing Scripture himself.

One may say, "How do you know that Scripture is the Word of God?" I reply, "How do you know that the sun shines?" If you say, "It does not," you manifest the ground you are on, as denying it, If you say, "It does," you admit it, God has spoken so as to make Himself known, and to make people know He is speaking.

In the New Testament the Holy Ghost comes down and vitalizes all the circumstances through which the new man has to pass. He takes up the little things of everyday Christian life. It is a mistake to suppose the Holy Ghost only engages Himself with great ecclesiastical things. As there is nothing too great for God to give us, so there is nothing too little for God to take up and interest Himself in for us. There is nothing so common as eating and drinking and dress. These things are here taken up most strongly. Even these things become an opportunity for the glory of God. God would never have us to act as a man but always, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to act as a Christian. Thus the Holy Ghost enters upon the circumstances of daily Christian life, and vitalizes them. When the Apostle wrote of these things therefore, the words in which he wrote are the words of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2:13) as much as when the prophet of old uttered his magnificent strains with "Thus saith the LORD," and then sat down to study his own prophecies to see what they meant and of whom they spake. (See 1 Pet. 1:10-12.)

The man of God is prepared unto every good work in his having departed from iniquity and purged himself from the vessels of dishonor. In chapter 2 he is equipped; in chapter 3 he is furnished unto every good work; in chapter 4 he goes to war. He is to "reprove, rebuke, exhort." This shows the signs of failure which the wisdom of the Spirit foresaw. It was not so much evangelizing as preaching the word" among professing Christians who would not endure sound doctrine. All this was to be done in view of His appearing and His kingdom. Then faithfulness would be manifested.

We should be more earnest than ever in living to Christ, as we are now in the shaking of all things, and the Lord may come at any time now. Worldliness among us is a sign and a source of weakness. It must be "with all long-suffering and doctrine." These are the elements that must give character to our service. If men were left to their own responsibility they would never come in.

So he concludes, "I am already being poured out" (v. 6, N. Trans.). In Phil. 2 it had been "If... I am poured out" (N. Trans.). Things have gone further here. "My release" is the thought because he had been in the combat as an athlete. He can say, "I have fought a good fight,... I have kept the faith." It was the finishing of his race and wrestling of 1 Cor. 9:24-27. The Lord would preserve him to His heavenly kingdom if he was not to be preserved on earth (v. 18). Earlier his desire was that he might finish his course with joy (Acts 20). Here he has done it - have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

May we covet the same grace!

The Two Covenants

A covenant is a principle of relationship with God on the earth - conditions established by God under which man is to live with Him. The word may, perhaps, be used figuratively or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel; but strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel. The gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being of God; but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter. The new covenant will be established formally with Israel in the Millennium.

Two Golden Sentences: Settled in Heaven, Hidden in the Heart

The first is: "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89. The second is: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." v. 11.

These are in good truth golden sentences for the present moment. They set forth the true place for the word; namely, settled in heaven, and hidden in the heart. Nor is this all; they also link the heart on to the very throne of God by means of His own Word, thus giving to the Christian all the stability and all the moral security which the divine Word is capable of imparting.

We do not forget-God forbid we should-that in order to enter into the power and value of these words, there must be faith wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. We would remember this. But our present subject is not faith, nor yet the precious work of the Spirit of God, but simply the Word of God in its eternal stability and its holy authority. We esteem it an unspeakable mercy and privilege-in the midst of all the strife and confusion, the discussion and controversy, the conflicting opinions and dogmas of men, the ever shifting sands of human thought and feeling-to have something "settled." It is a sweet relief and rest to the heart that has, it may be, been tossed about for many a long year on the troubled sea of human opinion, to find that there is after all, and spite of all, that on which one may lean with all the calm confidence of faith, and find therein divine and eternal stability.

What a mercy, in the face of the unrest and uncertainty of the present moment, to be able to say, "I have gotten something settled -settled forever-settled forever in heaven:" What effect, we may ask, can the bold and audacious reasonings of infidelity, or the sickly vaporings of superstition have upon the soul that can say, "My heart is linked to the throne of God by means of that Word which is settled forever in heaven"? None whatever. Infidelity and superstition-the two great agents of hell in this very day in which we live-can only take effect upon those who really have nothing settled, nothing fixed, no link with the throne and heart of God. The wavering and undecided-those who halt between two opinions, who are looking this way and that way, who are afloat, who have no haven, no anchorage -these are in imminent danger of falling under the power of infidelity and superstition.

We invite the special attention of the young reader to all this. We would sound a warning note in the ears of such. The present is a moment of deep and awful solemnity. The archenemy is putting forth every effort to sap the very foundations of Christianity. In all directions the divine authority and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture is being called in question. Infidelity is gaining ground to a fearful extent at our seats of learning, and polluting the fountains whence the streams of religious thought and feeling are emanating over the land. Truth is at a discount, even among those who ought to be its guardians. We may nowadays behold the strange sight of professing Christian teachers taking part at meetings where professed infidels preside. Alas! alas! men who are professed infidels themselves may become pastors and teachers in that which calls itself the Church of God.

In the face of all this, how precious, how weighty is our motto, "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven"! Nothing can touch this. It is above and beyond the reach of all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils. "The word of our God shall stand forever." The Lord be praised for the sweet and solid consolation of this!

But let us remember the counterpart: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Here lies the great moral safeguard for the soul in this dark and evil day. To have God's Word hidden in the heart is the divine secret of being preserved from all the snares of the enemy, and from all the evil influences which are at work around us. Satan and his agents can do absolutely nothing with a soul that reverently clings to Scripture. The man who has learned in the school of Christ the force and meaning of that one commanding sentence, "It is written," is proof against all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Dear reader, let us earnestly entreat you to ponder these things. Let us remind you that the one grand point for the people of God, now and at all times, is obedience. It is not a question of power, or of gift, or of external show, or of numbers; it is simply a question of obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice." To obey what? The Church? No, the Church is a hopeless ruin, and cannot therefore be an authority. Obey what? The Word of the Lord. What a rest for the heart! What authority for the path! What stability for the whole practical career! There is nothing like it. It tranquilizes the spirit in an ineffable manner, and imparts a holy consistency to the character. It is a divine answer to those who talk of power, boast of numbers, point to external show, and profess reverence for antiquity. Moreover, it is the divine antidote for the spirit of independence so rife at the present day, for the haughty uprisings of the human will, the bold assertion of man's rights. The human mind is tossed like a ball from superstition to infidelity, and can find no rest. It is like a ship without compass, rudder, or anchor, driven hither and thither. But thanks be to God for all those to whose hearts the Holy Ghost has interpreted these two sentences. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

Two Sticks: a Lesson From Serepta

How many believers in this day are culpably like the poor widow of Sarepta before she met the Tishbite. They know so little of the wonderful service they are predestined of the Lord to fulfill for Him here, that they are, ignobly enough, looking only for a couple of sticks, accounting that they have just sufficient in the barrel and the cruse to die upon, but far from enough to live upon! They have so little understood the wonderful fact that they have present possession of Christ and of the Holy Ghost as the inexhaustible resources of faith - of which the meal (or wheat flour) and the oil were types - that they go along with their eyes upon the ground; and their piety chiefly consists in a suitable preparation for death. It may be in the near, or it may be in the distant, horizon, but this only is looming before their souls. These are they who religiously affirm that "in the midst of life we are in death," never having learned how much happier it is to be able to say, and how much more divinely true it is to the saint, that in the midst of death we are in life, not knowing either how incomparably greater a thing it is to be fit to live than to be fit to die.

When the famine had long raged throughout the land, and even beyond its borders, the prophet of God was directed to forsake Israel's dried up rivulet, Cherith, for Zarephath of Zidon, for there had Jehovah commanded a widow woman to sustain him; the many widows of Israel were passed over that a Gentile might taste of His goodness and be also the almoner of His resources. At the very gate of the city they met, and he, being entitled to draw at once upon her supplies, requests of her bread and water, only to elicit the disclosure of her abject penury. Everything but the last mouthful was gone, and she and her son were at the point of death.

Elijah's reply, "Fear not," etc., beautifully asserts the ascendancy of his faith. Be it that the famine was at its height, and that the person upon whom he was billeted was an embodiment of wretchedness and misery the most profound, he had gone there in the name and at the word of the God of Israel, to live, and not to die, and to announce, as well as to receive, succor. And as the two mites dropped into the Lord's treasury by the Jewish widow of another and a later day met the commendation that she had cast in more than all the rest, so were the "two sticks" of this Gentile widow, gathered with a view to the last desperate morsel before death, to be used for preparing, by the bounty of Jehovah, "enough and to spare," the prelude of a new lease of life to herself and to the prophet, and the pledge of unmeasured mercy and grace to the Gentiles.

She had gone forth from the city, having no object higher or happier than the "two sticks," but she found the Lord, as it were, at the gate; for there she met His prophet, and there she heard His word. How many believers are like her, as she sallied forth that eventful day, full of their own thoughts and forebodings! In what they have, and what they seek, they have self for their motive, thus rising no higher, and seeing no further, than the couple of sticks; for they have not yet met the Lord at the gate or, in other words, have not yet got their commission - the service for Himself He has assigned to them here.

What a revolution of soul must she have experienced as the word of Jehovah fell from the mouth of His prophet! Retracing her steps now, not to be the prey of death, but as one taken out of the

world, and afresh sent into the world, she enters the city with composure and with dignity, as hostess of the servant of the living God. Henceforth the famine is over for her and for her household, and she ranks as a commissioned officer in the commissariat of the Lord of hosts. In a marked manner is she identified with His interests on earth, and that primarily, for the prophet had said, "Make me thereof a little cake first." Her faith and her self denial ran together as twin sisters, for she did so, and she and her house did eat a full year, even until Jehovah sent rain upon the earth. Had anyone told her that morning that before the sun set she would eat abundantly, and her household, and that also she should entertain the same day as her guest the most distinguished man upon earth, even him at whose word the heavens had so long been shut up, would he not have been unto her as one that mocked?

And in like manner, how little now do saints generally recognize that no higher dignity and no greater privilege could be conferred upon us than are ours already, in being sent here to find in the interests of Christ our first consideration, and in being made competent, by the divine resources we possess, to minister of them as freely to others as we have partaken of them abundantly ourselves! How simply and how confidently did the Zidonian widow receive and act upon the Tishbite's testimony! She goes back into Sarepta ennobled by faith, and enriched with promises, qualified and commissioned by Jehovah to dispense His bounty to His honored servant, and to be the witness of divine superiority to the deepest human exigencies, as to herself and her house; she was a poor Gentile by nature, but bound up now in the bundle of life with Elijah and Elijah's God!

Nevertheless, she has practically to learn death. Upon the old ground she had met the wreck of every earthly hope in becoming a widow, but this would not suffice. Upon the new ground of divine favor and exhaustless benefits, death must be experimentally brought home to her heart. And so the son of her bosom is cut off before her eyes, but she receives him again at the hand of the Lord, plus the incalculable gain that the sentence of death carries with it to faith. She held him before, as the fruit of her womb; she gets him back as the fruit of resurrection. Moreover, the man of God (figure of Christ) and the word of the Lord are both established before her soul - "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth."

Surely all this is full of instruction for ourselves, and beautiful in its season, for the scene around is one of dearth, and drought, and death; and how happy and how blessed is the discovery made to faith, that in the antitypes of the flour and the oil we have Christ our life, and the Holy Ghost its power, in such present plenitude as to render us eminently superior to anything here, so that the famine prevailing in the old creation only enhances more and more unto our souls the immeasurable and unfailing resources of the new.

How little do they know of this who resemble the widow before she met Elijah, under pressure of what she felt powerless to avert, and only seeking to pass, without further suffering, out of this blighted scene - a sight as painful and as pitiable as a stranded ship on a barren coast! But the truly taught saint of God should be like a noble merchantman, freighted with a cargo more precious than gold of Ophir, filling her sails with every heavenly breeze, touching at every open port to discharge somewhat of her unworldly and exhaustless treasure, carrying divine blessing wherever she is welcomed, knowing moreover, that she is homeward bound, having everything taut and trim to enter harbor in full sail, "For so," says the Apostle Peter, "an entrance shall be

ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The Twofold Way of God: Sanctuary and the Sea

Psalm 77:13, 19

His way is "in the sanctuary," and His way is "in the sea." Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing in the least degree that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else- everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth.

We have the same thing in Psalm 73. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." That is, in the sanctuary of God everything is understood, no matter how difficult, and trying, and painful, as regards ourselves or others. When we once enter there, we are in the place of God's light and God's love; and then, whatever the difficulty may be, we understand all about it.

But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy), but God's way is in the sea. He walks where we cannot always trace His footsteps.

"We cannot always trace the way

Where Thou, our gracious Lord, dost move;

But we can always surely say That God is love.

"When fear its gloomy cloud will fling

O'er earth-our souls, to heaven above,

As to their sanctuary, spring, For God is love."

God moves mysteriously at times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But still there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in His own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with His footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterward, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with His people were there, because from first to last God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn.

How happy to know that while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God Himself is nearer still; and to Him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Pet. 3), "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." This is a most precious thing, because there we are

in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God Himself. And I am bold to say that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial, better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One to whom we belong, who is Himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to Him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God.

But still there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary-in the sea. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then they are not known. But confidence in God Himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that through which we pass, for His name's sake.

"Child of God, by Christ's salvation,
Rise o'er sin and fear and care-
Joy to find in every station,
Something still to do or bear;
Think what Spirit dwells within thee-
Think what Father's smiles are thine-
Think that Jesus died to win thee-
Child of God, wilt thou repine?

"Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith and winged by prayer,
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
God's right hand shall guide thee there;
Soon shall close thine earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."

Some Types Used in the Word of God: Egypt and Babylon

There is a wide moral difference between Egypt and Babylon which it is important to understand. Egypt was that out of which Israel came; Babylon was that into which they were afterward carried. (Compare Amos 5:25-27 with Acts 7:42, 43.) Egypt expresses what man has made of the world; Babylon expresses what Satan has made, is making, or will make of the professing church. Hence we are not only surrounded with the circumstances of Egypt, but also by the moral principles of Babylon.

This renders our "days" what the Holy Ghost has termed "perilous" ("difficult"). It demands a special energy of the Spirit of God, and complete subjection to the authority of the Word, to enable one to meet the combined influence of the realities of Egypt and the spirit and principles of Babylon. The former meet the natural desires of the heart, while the latter connect themselves with, and address themselves to, the religiousness of nature, which gives them a peculiar hold upon the heart. Man is a religious being, and peculiarly susceptible to the influences which arise from music, sculpture, painting, and pompous rites and ceremonies. When these things stand connected with the full supply of all his natural wants - yea, with all the ease and luxury of life - nothing but the mighty power of God's Word and Spirit can keep one true to Christ.

We should also remark that there is a vast difference between the destinies of Egypt and those of Babylon. Isa. 19 sets before us the blessings that are in store for Egypt. It concludes thus: "And the LORD shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD,

and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them.... In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance." vv. 22-25.

Very different is the close of Babylon's history, whether viewed as a literal city or a spiritual system. "I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts." Isa. 14:23. "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." Isa. 13:20. So much for Babylon literally; and looking at it from a mystic or spiritual point of view, we read its destiny in Rev. 18 The entire chapter is a description of Babylon, and it concludes thus: "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." v. 21.

With what immense solemnity should those words fall upon the ears of all who are in any wise connected with Babylon; that is to say, with the false, professing church. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. 18:4. The "power" of the Holy Ghost will necessarily produce, or express itself in, a certain "form," and the enemy's aim has ever been to rob the professing church of the power, while he leads her to cling to and perpetuate the form to stereotype the form when all the spirit and life have passed

away. Thus he builds the spiritual Babylon. The stones of which this city is built are lifeless professors; and the slime for mortar which binds these stones together is a "form of godliness" without the "power." [The author here refers to the beginning of Babylon - the tower of Babel in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11). It is also interesting to note that they built with bricks instead of stones; they used a substitute for stone, which very fittingly applies to mere professors who are not "living stones" in God's building. Ed.]

O my beloved reader, let us see to it that we fully, clearly, and influentially understand these things.

Usefulness

A question often arises about usefulness. Satan often beguiles by it. He may have suggested to John that he would be more useful if he were to compromise a little, and keep out of trouble for the sake of being free for his service to the saints. Useful to whom? To God or to men? God may be able to show out more of His glory by laying men aside. The eyes of God rested on Paul a prisoner, seemingly useless (not even always allowed to write), as the field for the display of some of the greatest privileges of truth. The very point when your weakness seems to make you useless is often the very way in which God shows forth His glory.

People think it strange that old Christians, useless ones, etc., etc., should be left, and young active ones taken. Do not you be trying to settle God's house for Him; do. not say, "What a pity for John to get to Patmos." The Lord wanted him there to communicate something that might serve His people to the end of time.

A person may be in difficult circumstances, and you may have it in your power to get him out of them in the power of human nature. And you may do it, and find out that God would have had him in them, because then he could have borne testimony; and you ought not to have measured things by your love for him and your comfort, but by the light of God. We often act on a set of thoughts of which the cord is bound to our own humanity instead of God's glory.

A Warning Against Refusing to Obey Light: Lines Written to a Young Person

Your case is, alas! not an uncommon one. It is a most serious thing to trifle with the truth of God, or to refuse the path which His Word plainly sets before us. Blessed be His name, He bears with us in our ignorance, our unbelief, and varied infirmities. But to sin against light is a fearfully solemn thing. "Give glory to the LORD your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Jer. 13:16.

Mark the words, "before He cause darkness." Does God cause darkness? Yes, verily, and blindness, if people refuse His light. There is no darkness so profound, no blindness so awfully complete, as that which God sends judicially upon those who trifle with His Word. Look at 2 Thess. 2 - "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Here we have the future destiny of Christendom. God shall send them strong delusion. He will turn their very professed light into gross darkness and the shadow of death. All this is most solemn. It should make us tremble at the very thought of refusing to act up to the light which God graciously affords us.

Look at the blessed contrast to all this, as given in Luke 11: "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." What does God give light for? That it may be quashed, quenched, hindered? Assuredly not, but that it may be seen. But how can it be seen if we do not act upon it? If we, for worldly gain, personal advantage, to please ourselves, or to please our friends, refuse to obey the Word of God, and thus hide the light under a bushel, what then? It may issue in "gross darkness"- "the shadow of death"- "strong delusion." How awful!

But our Lord continues, "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single"- that is, when you have but one object before you-"thy whole body also is full of light"-beautiful state!--but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."

How striking the contrast! Instead of stumbling on the dark mountains, the obedient soul not only has light for his own path, but he is actually a light bearer for others. The moral progress in the above passage is uncommonly fine. There is first the single eye- the one single, firm, earnest purpose of the heart to go right on in the path of obedience, cost what it may. Then the body is full of light. And what more can there be? There is something more, for assuredly there is no redundancy in Scripture-"If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark"-no reserve, no chamber of the heart kept locked up on account of friends, self-interest, worldly ease, or ought else -"the whole shall be full of light"-you become transparent, and your light shines so

that others see it. Not that you think so, for a single eye never looks at self. If I make it my object to be a light bearer, I shall get full of darkness, and be a stumbling block. When Moses came down from the mount, the skin of his face shone. Did he see it or know it? Not he. Others saw it; and thus it should be with us. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

Finally then, dear friend, let us entreat you to yield yourself without reserve to the word of your Lord. Suffer not your "friends" to stand in your way. Will your friends answer for you before the judgment seat of Christ? Can they now fill your heart with that sweet peace which can only be found in the path of obedience? They do not deserve the name of friends if they stand in your way of following Christ. They are just like the swallows that flutter about us in the summer time, but on the first approach of autumn blasts they wing their way to sunnier climes. Obey, we beseech you, the word of your Lord. Let no flimsy excuse, no worldly consideration, no thought of personal aggrandizement weigh with you for a single moment. What will all these things be worth in the light of the judgment seat of Christ? What will you think of them in eternity?

But you will tell us you are saved; you are a "Christian girl"; you have eternal life; you can never perish. Thank God for all this. But surely you do not mean to say that this is any reason why you should not obey what you know to be the Word of God. Is it not rather the very ground of obedience, and the love of Christ, the constraining motive? What are all the friends in the world compared with Christ? Would they shed their blood to do you good? No, but they are making you miserably unhappy to please them. You would rather pain the heart of Jesus, by neglecting His commandments, than pain your friends by obeying Him.

May the Lord help you, dear friend, to lay aside every weight, and sin which besets you, and run with patience and true purpose of heart the race that is set before you.

Way of Blessing: "Go Unto Joseph"

Joseph is the most beautiful and complete type of the Lord Jesus in the days of His humiliation and in the days of His exaltation. The day is not come yet when God will compel men to give Jesus His due, because God has what Pharaoh had not - long patience - and the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation.

Joseph, you will remember, went out in the guilelessness and love of his heart to meet his brethren (Gen. 37). They plotted against him to slay him, and at length he was sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, the price of the meanest slave. And I need not remind you of another who came from His Father's house to see how His brethren fared, and met with precisely the same treatment - "His own received Him not" - and at length for thirty pieces of silver he was betrayed, and sold, and then cast out of this world; not into a dungeon, but a grave.

It is true, loving hands took Him down from the cross and placed Him in a sepulcher; but wicked hands sealed Him there, and the world hoped never to see Him again; "but God raised Him from the dead." The -One whom men slew, God raised up.

He came in all the love of His heart; but man had no love for Him. I ask you, my reader, Have you any love in your heart for Him? Does He look in and see in your heart affection for Himself? If not, do not you be the one to judge those who cast Him out in the day of His lowliness and humiliation.

As Pharaoh placed Joseph by his own side in his day, and they cried, "Bow the knee" before him (Gen. 41:40.43), so God has placed Jesus at His right hand today, and commands men everywhere to bow to Him. Every knee shall bow to Jesus; but God would have you bow your knee - and more, bow your heart - to Jesus now. Have you gone down in His presence, delighted to own His value now, delighted to call Him Lord? If not, the sooner you do, the better it will be for you.

The humiliation of Jesus gave Him a moral claim on God for exaltation, and He has exalted Him, and "given Him a name which is above every name." There is no name like the name of Jesus. God has declared that all shall own Him as Lord - angels, men, and demons - and you may be sure all includes you. The demons never owned Him Lord when He was on earth, but the day will come when God will compel them to own Him Lord. And for you, my reader, When is to be your day of owning Him Lord? now, when He is waiting on you in long-suffering grace, or in the day of His power, when you must bow? "Bow the knee" is God's word to you now.

Doubtless to many a proud Egyptian noble there was great humiliation in having to bow to this Hebrew servant; but the day of famine came, and neither their pride nor their parentage would meet the pangs of famine. Then they cried to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh's word was, "Go unto Joseph." And many a soul in trouble cries to God. What is God's answer, as it were? "Go to Jesus."

Have you, my reader, the sense of soul hunger? God's word is, "Go to Jesus." Do you say, I know what soul hunger is; I would like to be saved, if I knew how to go to Jesus? Look at this interesting narrative, how they came to Joseph.

He was, according to the meaning of his name, Zaphnath-Paaneah, "a revealer of secrets," and "the savior of the age." And is not this what Jesus is?

Look at Him in the 4th of John, when that poor woman met Him at the well. Did He not show Himself to her as the revealer of secrets when He said to her, "Thou hast had five husbands"? Ah! Christ knows all; Christ knows every sin, and for those who believe in Him He has pardoned every one. Knowing all about us, He loved us; and loving us, He came down to save us.

When the woman found He knew all about her, did she flee? No, she stayed and talked with Him, and she was one moment a convicted sinner, and the next Christ revealed Himself to her, and she left her waterpot and went into the city and said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Instead of being afraid of Him, she called to all to come and know Him too; and they came, and found He was not only the revealer of secrets, but the Savior of the age - the true Joseph.

Have you come to this Revealer of secrets, this Savior of the age, yet? Does your conscience answer, No; I have not come to Him yet? Why not, my reader? Perhaps you say in your heart, I do not know how He would receive me if I came.

Let us look at how Joseph received his brethren when they came to him in their need.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt." Gen. 42:1.3. They heard that there was corn in Egypt. They heard that there was deliverance to be had if they could only get it, and they were perishing. They heard there was salvation, and they felt their need, and felt they would like to be saved, but they could not get salvation without going to the savior. They could not get deliverance apart from the deliverer; they could not get food in their hunger save from Joseph - Joseph the despised one, the one they had hated, the one they had cast out and sold, but the one whom God had raised up to have every resource in his power, everything that could meet their need.

And you, my reader, Do you feel you are in need of salvation? Have you heard of a deliverance which you would like to be yours?

Is your soul hungry, and have you heard of "bread enough and to spare"? Have you heard of salvation that others have known, and would you like it too? Then you must come into living contact with the Savior. It is from the Savior only you can get salvation. Jesus is that Savior, and He waits and longs to save you.

-Joseph's brethren are in need now, and they come to Joseph; and you must do just the same.

"And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." v. 6.

They come and bow themselves down to Joseph; and it is a blessed thing when you are compelled, even by your need, to bow to Jesus, for He is the only one who can meet that need.

"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.... And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: hereby ye shall be proved: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.... And he put them all together into ward three days." vv. 7-17.

His brethren did not know Joseph, but he knew them. He spake roughly to them. They thought he was a hard man. Do you think Christ is an "austere man"? He will tell you what you are, tell you that you are a sinner full of enmity to God, that there is no good thing in you. People do not like that. They do not like to be shown what is in their hearts.

Joseph deals with his brethren as God does with the sinner, for God must get at our consciences, and must make us feel and know what we have been and are. So Joseph's dealings with his brethren arouse conscience, for they say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." v. 21.

It is a wonderful thing when the soul is brought to this point, to own itself a guilty sinner before God. God must have reality. Have you, my reader, ever seen yourself thus in the light of God's presence?

Has your conscience ever been awakened to cry, I am undone; I am verily guilty?

"And he [Joseph] turned himself about from them and wept." And did not another greater than Joseph weep ov'r guilty Jerusalem; and not only weep, but shed His precious blood because of the love of His heart?

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack." v. 25. What is the lesson of the money in the sack? That if you are to get salvation, you cannot buy it. You are too poor to buy it, and God is too rich to sell it. Salvation must be God's free gift, and you must have it as a gift, or not have it at all.

Joseph's brethren went back and told their father all that Joseph had said; and Jacob refused to let Benjamin go down, for he said, "His brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Gen. 42:38.

But the famine increases. Their need increases; food they must have, or die. Judah offers to be surety for his brother, and Jacob is constrained to let the lad go; but he says, "Do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present,... and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy. before the man." Gen. 43:11-14.

This is man's way of getting salvation. People think they are going to get saved by propitiating God. They will work, and give alms, and what not. But it will not do. No money will buy salvation, and God does not want appeasing. He is waiting to be gracious, waiting for the moment when He can display what is in His heart, which is only love.

Joseph's brethren came down again to him, and when he saw Benjamin he gave commandment that they should be brought into his house. "And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house." Yes, the soul wakes up to learn it is guilty, and then it fears the presence of God. But Joseph spake comfortably to them to win their hearts, and they sat at meat with him. "And they marveled one at another. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him; but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him."

Then in chapter 44 they have to confess their sins. Judah says, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." v. 16. This is the point God would bring us to. Not only conscience making us see our state, but there is also the owning of that state. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So said David in Psalm 32, and so must every soul that really turns to God.

In chapter 45 the wonderful climax is reached. Joseph revealed himself to them. "I am Joseph." The Joseph they had sold as a slave stood before them as ruler over all the land, but meeting them in all the grace of his heart. He caused everyone else to go out, and the guilty were left alone in the presence of the savior. What a lovely picture of divine grace follows! "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, who ye sold into Egypt." v. 4.

When the work in the conscience is done, then the Lord can come near and reveal Himself. He never comes and reveals Himself till the sinner takes his true place - is angry with himself.

"Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither," he says, "for God did send me before you to preserve life." You have been guilty, Joseph says, but God had a purpose in it.

And man was guilty of nailing the Savior to the cross; but God had His own thoughts, His own meaning in it all; and that very death on the cross of the Savior becomes the basis and groundwork, through atonement, of the great deliverance Christ accomplishes for the sinner; salvation for him is the fruit of the sufferings of the Savior there.

But after all this display of the heart of Joseph to his brethren, and after seventeen years of caring for them, and giving them the best of everything, and rewarding them only love for their hatred, the last chapter of Genesis shows they still did not fully know Joseph.

"When Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." Gen. 50:15-17.

All this is like some doubting, fearing, unhappy Christians who tell me they believe on the Lord, and yet they have not peace. They are full of fears; they are not sure He has received them and forgiven them; they do not know His heart; and another thing, they have never had all out with Him. Have no reserves, my reader. Have it all out with Jesus, and do not you be the one to make our Joseph weep; for the heart of the Lord Jesus feels today your lack of trust in Him, after all He has done for you, all the kindness and the love He has shown to you. Wound not then His loving heart by any lack of confidence in Him.

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not." That is just the way the Lord Jesus loves to comfort the soul. To get the confidence of the heart, He says to the trembling

one, Fear not; I am Jesus.

Joseph says again, "Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

And that is what Jesus says; for we are not only sheltered by His blood, but saved by His life. He will nourish and care for each one all the way along. O my reader, believe Him simply, and never wound His heart again by one single doubt.

We Belong to the Heavenly: Our Citizenship Is in Heaven

"Our citizenship is in heaven." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." What has a dead man to do with politics? But the Christian is one who has died in Christ - died to sin - died to the law - died to the world - and hence he has, in God's view of him, no more to do with these things than a man lying dead on the floor. He is alive in Christ - alive to God - alive to all that is spiritual, heavenly, divine. He is in the new creation. His morals, his religion, his politics are all in the new creation - all heavenly all divine. He is done with the world in spirit and principle. He is in it, to walk as a pilgrim and stranger - in it to live as a Christian - a spiritual, heavenly man - but not of it to walk as a worldly, carnal, natural man. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." May we live in the power of these things.

The Wisdom and Knowledge of God

It was essentially necessary that our blessed Lord should be legally the son of Joseph; virtually the son of Mary; really the Son of God; and all three meet in Matthew 1, in such a way as to evoke from our souls accents of wonder, love, and praise. We can only exclaim as we read such a record, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." If our Lord were not legally the son of Joseph, He could not claim the throne of David. If He were really his son, He could claim nothing at all.

Women With Heads Covered

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." 1 Cor. 11:3-9.

Here we have another instance of how the greatest truths are brought into connection with commonplace subjects. Here it is a question whether a woman is to have a covering on or not. The whole ordering of God is brought in to say whether a woman is to wear a cap [covering] on her head (vv. 3-16). It was the custom there with women inspired by demons to have their hair flowing out wild, and this was not the order for a woman. They were to recognize the authority of man if they prayed or prophesied. Women did prophesy, for Philip had four daughters that did. The woman had her place for praying and prophesying, but not in the assembly. Men are to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. If a woman's husband were unconverted, it would not be right for her to pray with him if other men were there.... I have known a converted husband, when he went from home to tell his wife to pray with the household, including unconverted men; but I do not believe it was right.

The woman's head was to be covered. The Apostle shows by her hair that God had covered her, and her mind and will are put on the same ground. A woman ought to be covered at family prayers, or as one of Philip's daughters prophesying in her father's house. The principle applies to both praying and prophesying. The man is the head of the woman, and she puts a covering on her physical head to show that there is authority over her. The Apostle takes the state of the head of the body as a sign of the condition of the man or woman in respect of their moral head. The woman's head - the man - is her head really, and she must cover her own head in sign of her subjection; and so she says in effect, I have no head myself; the man is my head, and I am in subjection. The man could not do that, or there would be no visible head. A woman's gift ought to be confined to women, or to her own family....

"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." v. 10. She is therein a spectacle with all present to the angels, and angels ought not to see disorder among Christians. The whole subject is modesty, and order, and comeliness, and things in their right place. Therefore the woman ought to have power on her head on account of the angels; that is, the sign of subjection. Angels should learn something in the Church.

The Word Made Flesh

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:1-13.

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gospel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter. The object of the Holy Ghost is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as this opening chapter of this gospel. His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinct language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Ghost; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Ghost are not. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God who alone was the Word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in Their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into the world, but "in the beginning was the Word" when there was no creature. Before anything came into being that was made, the Word was in the beginning with God - not merely in God, as if merged or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before a creature existed. He "was in the beginning with God." This is of immense importance, and with these truths our Gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterward. "All things were made by Him." There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that which had none, causing to exist by His own will and power. Now all things exist by the Word; and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit, has added, "and without Him was not anything made that was made."

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made - "In Him was life." It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. "In Him was life." Not that this life began to be; all else, all creation, began to be, and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence.

But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature. It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but in Him was life. Man

was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called the light of angels but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They are kept by divine power and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

And this "light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It is striking to remark here the entire passing over of all the history of the world of which we are apt to make so much; yes, even of the dispensational dealings of God with men. All is passed by very briefly indeed - those ages that man thinks all but interminable, in which God gave being to the creature, and in which He may have changed over and over again the various forms of the creature, where science is endeavoring to pursue its uncertain and weary way. All this is closed up in the few words, "All things were made by Him." Scripture, and this chapter in particular, summarizes it with striking brevity. "All things were made by Him." The details of it were left completely aside. What was good for us to know, we are told in Gen. 1 There is nothing like that chapter, even in cosmogonies which borrowed from it. And all that man has thought or said or written about a system of the world is not to be named with it for depth or certainty, as well as for simplicity, in the smallest compass.

But there is a reason why all such matters vanish after two or three words. It is because the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, is the object that the Holy Ghost is dwelling on. The moment that He is brought out, creation just pays Him homage, owning Him to be the Creator, and is then forthwith dismissed. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is enough to say that He created all. He remains in His own grace. Now we learn what is the Spirit's object in this. It was not to give us details of the creation; it was to acquaint us with Jesus as the light of men.

In what condition then did He find men? Were there not great differences among them, as was thought? There were some-most indeed - idolaters, yet wise and prudent, worshiping stocks and stones; and others who were not idolaters but very zealous for the law as given by Moses. Not that a word is said yet about the law, nor about any differences, but that the Word of God was the light that manifested everybody; whether Jews or Gentiles, they were only darkness. It is not therefore only that the physical creation is passed by most curtly, but the moral world is closed with almost equal brevity. "The light shineth in darkness," and whatever the boasting of the Gentiles, and the law of the Jews (which was real as compared with the Gentiles), here all is measured and put out, as it were, by the true light, the Word of God. Jew or Gentile, they are but darkness, and the light shines in darkness, and spite of all its pretension and pride, the darkness comprehended it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." When the Holy Ghost is come down, things are also tested and convicted by Him; and He is brought forward by Paul somewhat as John here introduces the Son of God. It shows how poor all of man is in comparison with God, and how little he is capable of appreciating the truth in the Son or by the Spirit.

Then we find John brought in. The reason why he is singled out from all others I believe to be this - he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord Jesus. He would surely not have been named here if it were not so, because he was the moon that derived its light from the sun - from the Lord Jesus

just about to come. His was only a derivative light, and he seems brought in here because of that peculiarity. Other prophets were too distant from Christ, but John was near enough to be an immediate precursor of the Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe." It is no question of law-testing or proving. All this was very important in its place; but the glory that the law had is completely eclipsed by a brighter glory. Scripture therefore takes pains to say John "was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." He might be "a burning and a shining lamp" (as it ought to be in chapter 5), but he was only an earthly and derived light. "He was not that Light." "That was the true Light"; Jesus is the Light, the true Light, which (as rightly rendered) on coming into the world lighteth every man. It is speaking of the effect of Christ's coming into the world. It is not every man that cometh into the world, but that when He comes into the world, He is the One that casts His light on everyone here below. There had been a time when, as it is said in the Acts, God winked at the ignorance of men; but now everything must appear in its own light, or rather darkness, because the true Light was come; and therefore when He comes into the world He lights every man there - all are brought out just as they are and none can escape. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him"; and the awful result of this darkness was that "the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The world was guilty enough; it was so dark that it did not

even know Him. The Jews had abundance of truth by which they might know Him, but their will was still more set against the Son of God than even the poor Gentiles. "His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [title or right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a blessed place! and blessed to know that this is our place to which grace has entitled us now in His name! May we seek to make Him known to every creature with all our hearts in the measure of power the Lord has given us, honoring thus, and in every other way, the Lord Jesus whom the Holy Ghost loves to honor.

We have other glories of Him brought out afterward. We hear of Him as the Son, the Lamb of God, the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost, the King of Israel; and the Son of man. All these are successively unfolded to us in this chapter. Indeed it would be difficult to say what glory of our Lord is not presented here except that of priest, and of Head of the Church. John never gives us the priesthood of Jesus. He touches what is close on it when he speaks in his first epistle of advocacy with the Father; but the business of John was to show His divine personal glory, yet as man on earth. Priest was what He was called to be in heaven; and as Head of the Church He is there also. But John shows us what He was in Himself as coming from heaven, and that He does not lose one whit of His glory by becoming a man. In His being priest and Head of the

Church, we see special glories which He received on going up to heaven, and these Paul develops fully. John's point is God and the Father manifested on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

Work for the Lord

The simple inquiry recorded as the first utterance of Paul to our Lord ("Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?") is the duty and expression of every one distinctly awakened to the claim Christ has on him. This inquiry cannot be too earnestly instituted, and the reply to it too rigidly attended to. The inquiry is the offspring of a soul sensible that the Lord has entire and full claim on it, without the knowledge which authorizes it. The soul feels, "I am taken out of the world, and I am given to Christ, and hence I look to Him for my place and future occupation in it." If we are given to Christ "out of the world," it is evident that it is He alone who has the right to determine our way and course in the world.

I could not say, if I believe that I am given to Him "out of the world," that I have any right to reoccupy any place or engagement which I had previously held in the world. True, He does not require or permit me to infringe on any legal lord under whom I was held before I was given to Him. But, excepting where the rights of others, would be compromised, I am Christ's bondman. Vested legal rights are not to be compromised because of my being given to

Christ. But I am Christ's bondman; and necessarily if I am, both from duty and inclination, my inquiry ought to be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The more I own and realize the relationship between us, which now exists through grace, the more simply and continuously will this be my wholehearted cry to Him. Now if it is, I will of course accede and attend to whatever He may intimate to me, and this only. That is, the heart true and devoted to Him, making this request, will wait on Him for guidance and counsel. It would find no real satisfaction in being anywhere or doing anything which was not according to His mind. Our place and our occupation here would be only determined by the pleasure of Him whose we are and whom we serve. Any departure from the tie or rule of this relationship would sensibly interfere with the mutual satisfaction therein known. There would be a break in upon, and a disturbance of, the true order of life, and the blessings connected with it.

Nothing is so simple and nothing is so important in our walk down here! I belong to Christ, and I find it His pleasure and my happiness to do nothing but as He desires and instructs me. I live where He likes, and I do what He likes. If we did this, there would be no mistakes on one side or the other. But we do make mistakes on both sides -on one side at one time, and on another side at another time. At one we plan out work for ourselves, and at another we do none at all.

Now the first is the most difficult to deal with simply because the counterfeit deceives one; and hence, while it is comparatively easy to convict the Martha that she is unwisely occupied, the work seems so right and necessary that it appears almost impossible that there could be any plan in it. Nothing so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ. For instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough, I am His bondman), but if I am not near Him, if I am not in His confidence, and I begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, there is no doubt I am doing it legally, and not as simply suits Him. It is to

make myself easy and satisfied. When this is the case, I do not consult what He would like me to do, but I do what I think best to be done. It is not His pleasure that guides me; it is my own mind as to what is suitable and proper. It may be quite necessary, as Martha's service; but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and not governed by the pleasure of Christ.

Here is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are truehearted) because we have not the acknowledgment of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience, and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services (however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling that they devolved upon me), I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at His feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of soul up into Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end. It is most blessed to work for Christ; it is fruit-bearing. But if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am working for Christ, and growing up into Him, sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find anyone serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true service.

If you begin with serving (as many do nowadays), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting there, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage, for it is at the sitting that the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known. Hence there is damage done, and loss is sustained by the soul, when service preoccupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where service is most prominent.

I never met with anyone making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet. But, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at His feet above any service. And it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be competent to serve, and most in His confidence, which after all is the clue to all efficient service.

The Work of Grace: for Us and in Us

"Then were there two thieves crucified with Him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Matt. 27:38-44.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43.

The Savior, the Son of man, was dying - the just One in place of the many unjust - bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. This was His great work for us. But of the two malefactors between whom He was crucified, both of whom had reviled Him, one became converted, and showed a work of grace wrought in him.

The work of grace for us, and the work of grace in us, are not one and the same thing, any more than the death of Christ for the thief, and the change inside the thief (by the means of which he ceased to be a blasphemer, and owned Jesus) were one and the self-same thing. The former is outside of us, and was wrought by CHRIST; the latter is in ourselves, though wrought there by grace.

I desire to present a few thoughts which are connected with this most important subject.

First, What is it which hinders God and a sinner meeting and being together? True, the sinner's will is opposed to God; His heart's affections, too, are alienated from God; and doubtless if he, a sinner, were in the light of God's presence, he would find soon enough that the light of God's presence discovers all the sin of the creature. But the difficulty was not in the creature, however sunk, alienated, and deluded he may be, and however unsuited for such a one the holiness and majesty of God's presence may be. There was another question, one of far higher and deeper import; that is, How could God, in His holiness and righteousness, meet a sinner who has by sin done dishonor to God? Sin is an insult to God - to God in His majesty and being - and the soul that gets into the light knows this to be so.

As far as God is concerned, the work of grace in us is never separated from the work of grace for us. From the day of the fall and of man's exclusion from Eden, God wrought in man, but always upon the ground of the work which He meant to do for man. And in working thus in man, He has

constantly presented some object to the mind in which the work for man was shadowed forth.

The sacrifice offered by Abel, the victims of the patriarchal worship, the sacrifices of the sanctuary, etc., all pointed onward to the work which Christ was to do for man - a work by which alone God could be just while justifying a sinner, and which alone can ever satisfy the conscience of a sinner in the presence of God about sin. But the work in man preceded the work for man in all these cases. At Calvary the Son of man gave Himself a ransom for us. From that day onward the work of grace for man has had nothing added to it, nothing new from the time that "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." But though the work for man is finished, yet the work of grace in man is quite as needful now as ever. That it is wrought in man by the Holy Ghost, through faith in the work accomplished for man, is true; but it must be wrought in man or man is lost.

The peculiarity of the conversion of the thief upon the cross is that it is a case in which grace was working in a man to open his heart to Christ at the very moment that Christ was doing for man that work without which no way was opened for God to bless, nor open for man to come for blessing.

On this account the distinctness of the two things is the more easily seen, and this may help some to see how they should not confound them together, and how impossible it would be for the one to be exchanged so as to be made to take the place of the other.

Justice had brought the two thieves, for their misdeeds, to the violent death of the cross. There they were surrounded by a mass who were gathered to the spot to revile and blaspheme the crucified Savior.

The thieves heard the revilings and adopted them for they cast the same in His teeth. But an entire change came over one of them. Light broke in upon his soul, and in his case it was the light of life - eternal life.

God had taken His rightful place in the man's soul. The effect was immediate; and, remark he rebuked his fellow malefactor: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." When the candle of the Lord searches a man, it is sure to discover sin in him to himself. It must be so; for righteousness and holiness are inseparable from the light of God, and man is unholy. The light detects and shows the unholiness. Yet there is in this experience of the thief also another feeling expressed. He knew sin to be inseparable from himself; he knew it, and yet he sought to put it down with an unhesitating mind. He rebuked his fellow malefactor for doing the very thing which he himself had done just before, and the which he had but just ceased to do.

This was, as man would count it, practically inconsistent. Quite so. Conscience, when it gets into God's presence, and has the light of life, acts in a way which is very inconsistent with human thoughts of consistency and propriety. He was inconsistent as a man, but consistent as a saint. It is strange, that first dread and hatred of sin which leads us to put our mouths in the dust and to condemn sin in ourselves part of our being as it may have been. But it is a blessed instinct of the new life, of life divine in a soul, that sin must be condemned, for it is hateful. This true taste of what sin is, is a very different thing from the dread of the consequences of sins. Dread of the consequences of sin and sins may alarm and terrify the soul, and drive it to seek a Savior. But the light of life shining in quickening power into a soul separates between it and the sin itself - gives it

an altogether new estimate of what sin is. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

How full, both in the general statement and in the particular detail, is his confession of sin! What an abandoning and disclaiming of all human righteousness! "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds."

And it was light, not vague and ill-defined, that shone in upon his soul, but clear and distinct; for it was the light of a contrast between the Christ of God and himself; "But this man hath done nothing amiss." Himself and the Christ were in his conscience, contrasted the one with the other. His language was that of faith; and little as he knew it he was, in the hour of the Lord's being forsaken by all, giving the description of Him which will be owned of God to be true of Christ alone. "This man hath done nothing amiss" will be loudly proclaimed as true of Christ alone in the glory; and all of us that will be there will know and own the perfectly graphic, distinctive description, as being His alone. Of Adam's race, from Eden down to the placing of the great white throne, there has not been one save the Seed of the woman of whom it could be said in truth, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

God, sin, himself, the Man that is Jehovah's fellow - these were not only new experiences of his soul, but they marked that he had a new life, and had got into a world of light where things are seen just as they are. But his faith went further, and he saw not only the personal peculiarity of the sinless One at his side, but also that there was in Him a heart on which, spite of all the contrast between Christ and himself, he might cast his every care.

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The glories, and the kingdom, and the majesty of the Lord broke in upon his soul - sinner as he was - and yet he saw that in that One there was the only rest, the alone hope for him. This also is an instinct of the new nature. It will see and own the contrasts between the Christ and what we are, but it will cleave to Him in spite of our misery and His gloriousness - it will cleave to Him as being all our salvation.

If we are to be vessels filled with grace, we may be assured that there has been a somewhat similar work wrought in us - and we shall be able to record it as a work of the Lord in us - a work which puts us just where the Lord's work in the dying thief put him; that is, into the position of expecting from the Lord, into a position in which the Lord could show some of the exceeding riches of His grace, as He did in His answer to the thief. The thief asked to be remembered in the kingdom; Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Christ had His rightful place in this poor sinner's soul, and no mistake about it, and this place was His from the time that the rocky heart was riven open. But what the thief experienced in his own soul - the blessed work which God was doing in the soul of the poor thief - while it fitted him to receive the grace, could not appear in heaven in place of the blood of the Lamb of God. It could neither justify God in justifying a thief, nor discover to the thief that which, in the light, is his justification before God. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Christ was then and there shedding His blood, giving His life, the Just One in place of the unjust. And whether that poor thief, or any other sinner, were ever saved or not the way is plainly set forth in which God declares that He is free to bless the vilest of the vile - the way too in which the vilest of the vile that

comes by it finds a way of peaceful access to God.

If no one upon earth cared for that new and living way, yet it is a new and living way, and it is open - open for man to draw nigh to God, even into the holiest of all in the heavens.

The work of grace in us cannot be substituted for, cannot be put in the place of the work of grace for us; the work of grace in me cannot vindicate God's holiness so as to justify Him in moving in favor of me, a sinner. And, clearly, as far as it is a work of grace wrought in me by God, God has moved in my favor to work it ere it ever was wrought. And, moreover, it contains in it, for just the selfsame reason, no answer to my conscience if it is in the presence of God - nothing that can make for me a perfect conscience.

God has a right to act without man's leave, and in spite of man. None can say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" But then He has a character of His own which He will not deny. And if He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, He does so in a way which thoroughly vindicates His holiness and His justice; in a way which elevates conscience in man while it gives to it perfect liberty and boldness of approach unto God in the light.

People may argue against justification by faith alone; but they may depend upon it that if they ever find themselves in the same light of life in which the poor thief found himself, they will find that they themselves appear very miserable, and that there is an attractive beauty about the Christ who is all the salvation of the soul.

Many may turn faith into a work for themselves to work, but they will find that the Spirit convicts of unbelief, and that all their rest is in the Lord Himself, and in the work He has wrought for poor sinners.

From the day of Pentecost the testimony of God has been about that work itself, and how heaven was opened thereby for the Holy Ghost to come down, and for man to draw near by faith.

When the testimony of God is received; for instance, about Christ as a new and living way (see Heb. 10), the soul that receives it finds its assurance to be in the work itself so presented to it - not in its own feelings, thoughts, or experiences about it, but in the work itself. For so has God been pleased to settle it. The light shining in brings with it its own testimony. It places me in the sight of God upon His throne in heaven, where He has placed Christ, who bare sin in His own body on the tree, that He might become the new and living way of blessing from God to man, and of approach by man to God.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the God who has provided Himself a lamb, that His mercy and His compassion might be evident before all - heaven opened upon them.

That the heart of man is so wicked and so deluded that it cannot, will not, believe such things of God is true - in this is seen the awfulness of man's condition. He must meet God, and he hates Him, and loves to nourish hard thoughts of Him. But when the light of life does break in, it is its own evidence.

Its entrance may not be understood at first, but the light will be found to be evidence of the subject whence it comes, and will be found to be the light, of life.

The Worship of Many Gods

Polytheism (worship of many gods, see 1 Cor. 8:5) appeared on the earth sometime after the flood. There is no record or intimation that men made gods for themselves prior to the deluge. Wickedness was rampant, and corruption and violence filled the antediluvian earth, but the sin of idolatry was unknown between man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the judgment by water.

On the cleansed earth God put government into the hands of men that violence might be restrained "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Noah and his family knew God, both by witnessing His judgments and in being preserved by His grace, and from them was handed down a traditional knowledge of God; but of their descendants we read:

"When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. 1:21-23.

Satan, who at first pulled man down through his temptations and then led him into gross licentiousness and violence until the flood, now made himself into a god for man to gratify his passions. This enemy of God and man, together with his wicked spirits, hid behind the idols. Another has described the making of the many deities of the heathen in these words:

"Having lost God... man made a god of everything in which the power of nature showed itself, making of it a plaything for his imagination, and using it to satisfy his lusts.... Although man could not free himself from the consciousness that there was a God, a Being who was above him, and though he feared Him, he created for himself a multitude of inferior gods, in whose presence he would seek to drive away this dread.... Everything took the form of "God" in man's eyes; the stars, his ancestors... the powers of nature, all that was not man but acted and operated without him.... He made gods for himself according to his passions and imaginations, and Satan took advantage of it."

After a time God called one man out of this evil to receive communications from Himself-"The God of Glory appeared unto... Abraham." In him and his family God raised up a witness to the fact that there is only one God. Israel's distinct testimony was monotheistic, and is expressed in the call to Israel: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." Deut. 6:4. They were given God's righteous laws for the ordering of their lives, and they were to be a display before the heathen of the greatness, goodness, and wisdom of Him who was their God. But, alas, they signally failed and fell into idolatry instead of witnessing against it, and finally did worse than the heathen who were in the land before them. The name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them (Rom. 2:24). Nevertheless there were individual heathen who found the true God in the Jehovah of Israel; for instance, Naaman the Syrian, Ruth the Moabitess, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon.

During the days of Israel's brightest testimony to the one true God, Satan brought forward a counterfeit. His lie was that there were two gods-that Ormazd was the god of light and goodness and Ahriman was the god of darkness, and that these carried on a ceaseless war, with man aiding one or the other. Needless to say, this dualism obscured the light of the God with whom man had to do as effectually as polytheism had. The Persians came under the influence of this evil-Zoroastrianism-almost entirely, so that when God, by Isaiah the prophet, called Cyrus the Persian king by name 150 years before he was born, He had to instruct him as to who He was. He told Cyrus what he was to do ill rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem and assisting the Jews, and then gave him a special word to reveal Himself in contrast with their false dual deities:

"That saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith Jehovah to His anointed, to Cyrus... I, Jehovah, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else. I form the light, and creat darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I Jehovah do all these things."* Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7.

It was important that Cyrus should know that his power was from the only true God, and that He (and not Ormazd and Ahriman) created both light and darkness, and sent peace or evil. There was no other God besides Him, whatever the Persians might believe to the contrary.

From that fateful day in the Garden of Eden until now, Satan has sought to come between man and his Creator; and today there are more false gods-the objects of desire and worship-than at any previous time. The god of this world is blinding the minds of those who believe not, just as efficiently today as he ever did with polytheism or dualism. What a powerful contrast to all this is expressed in the language of adoring faith! "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." 1 John 5:20, 21.

The Worst Is yet to Come: January 1950

Well may we ask, as we begin the "fifties," What will the next ten years bring to this poor world? We who are the Lord's need have no fears as to the future; we can say with the woman of faith in 2 Kings 4, "It is well." But our deep sympathies should be with the unsaved people all around, for ominous indeed are the signs of the future. A storm is gathering which will make all the past troubles of the world seem but very trivial. We should have more of the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem because of the troubles that were coming on it.

If we realized what is surely coming on this Christ-rejecting world we would be warning men, women, and children, and seeking to lead them to safety as Rahab did those whom she brought under the shelter of the scarlet line. Lot realized too late what was coming on his relatives, friends, and acquaintances in Sodom, and rushed out in the night to plead with his sons-in-law to flee for safety, but alas! they would not heed his warning.

As the end approaches, events seem to move at an accelerated pace. Let us glance back just ten years. On New Year's Day in 1940, world war number two was only four months old. Only Poland had been conquered; England and France had not yet felt the war's sting; the Netherlands and Belgium were not invaded; Russia had not taken over Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania; Germany and Russia were still at peace; Italy had not entered the war; Greece had not yet been alarmed; Japan was at peace except for a campaign in China; the United States was complacent and at ease; Great Britain still ruled Palestine under the League of Nations mandate. But the great changes and terrible calamities that followed are well known.

In the short space of ten years millions died in battle, from starvation, from hardships, from broken hearts, and from atrocities in concentration camps. The maps of Europe and Asia have been remade, and rulers have been overthrown and governments changed in a single decade.

And what about the outlook? It is dark and foreboding; the world is a much greater armed camp today than it was ten years ago, and the great armaments race is on between East and West. Something that was little more than a physicist's dream then - an atomic bomb - is now a dread reality, with both sides rushing to stockpile the most terrible weapon of destruction ever invented. If people were not somewhat stunned by all that has happened there would be much greater apprehension and dismay now. Then too Satan keeps them occupied with fleeting pleasures and vanities, so that they have little time for contemplation; but the time is fast approaching when their hearts will fail them for fear of those things that are coming on the earth (Luke 21:26).

But what about the uplook? It is bright and cheery! The long dark night has almost ended and the Morning Star will appear at any moment. Our calmness and peace in the midst of a confused world will depend on whether we look up or look around. There is a word given in Luke 21:28 for the Jewish remnant who will be here during the great tribulation: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." And if they are to "look up," how much more should we who have reason to expect His shout at any moment?

The last ten years witnessed more events for alignment of nations preparatory to the coming of the day of judgment than any previous time in history. Today we see the Nation of Israel in Palestine (a thing unthinkable ten years ago); Egypt is again independent; the Moslem world is ready for a leader to unite them against Israel; Russia is stronger than ever, and more greedy; European nations in the west are weak individually, and are seeking to perfect a common defense against Russia; Germany is divided along the lines of the old Roman Empire with Bonn, an old Roman Empire outpost, the new capital of Western Germany; the Atlantic Pact binds the great North American melting pot to support a league of Western European nations in the struggle with communism; the Roman church is actively engaged in the war with communism and is throwing her support to every nation which will oppose this deadly ideology.

Fellow-Christians, let us look up with expectant gaze and not be disconcerted by the confusion around. All is working out the purposes of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. This world cast His Son out of it, and judgment impends; and in His Word He has been pleased to reveal His plans to us. We need not see another development before we hear that shout in the air, and all that is lacking in the final arrangements for the time of the end is for the false prophet to proclaim himself the Messiah in Palestine and be accepted by the mass of the Jews; a leader of the Moslem nations to be the "king of the north"; and an incident to unite "ten kingdoms" of Western Europe into a revived Roman Empire with the backing of the Atlantic Pact nations of North America.

We need to keep our eyes and hearts heavenward and beware of being drawn away by the things that Satan is using to blind men and hinder saints. His seductions are on the increase and everything that displaces Christ in our hearts robs Him and us. In this connection may we say a word about television? Surely it is one of his devices to bring the "pleasures of sin" into the homes of Christians from the very places we shun - the theater, the arena, and other centers of carnal amusements. It combines his stock in trade - "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" - in one instrument. The eye, it is said, takes in more than the ear, and this latest invention of Cain's world meets both eye and ear with things that shock spiritual perception. May we one and all weigh these words: "Do all to the glory of God," "Set your affection [minds] on things above," and "Children, keep yourselves from idols," for "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

The Year of Jubilee

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.... And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbor, or buyest aught of thy neighbor's land, ye shall not oppress one another: according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee." Lev. 25:10, 14-16.

In these verses we learn that in all the dealing and trafficking of an Israelite he was to have respect to the year of jubilee, when the hand of God would restore in righteousness what the hand of man had disordered in His people's portion. The only way to conduct his traffic righteously was to have respect to the year of jubilee, measuring the bargain and the value of things according to that. In principle this holds now. For all our commerce in the affairs of this world should be ordered with our eyes resting on the return of the Lord Jesus, and our hearts acquainting themselves with this, that man's world is soon to end, and all present interests to cease.

In Israel, God watched over the worldly dealings of His people in such a way as to provide for the restoration of everything every fifty years. He then resettled the family estates, and put all in order again. In the Church also He watches the worldly dealings of His saints; but it is not in order to restore earthly arrangements again, but with respect to the maintaining of spiritual communion with Himself. In all their callings He tells His saints now "Therein [to] abide with God." This is the rule, this is the only limitation now. The soul, amidst all around that is discordant and disordered, is to be preserved for heavenly citizenship, and exercised in relation to a heavenly life, where the flesh and man's world will be gone, and gone forever.

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